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THE GREAT HIGHWAY.

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An Unexpected Meeting

THE GREAT HIGHWAY:

A STORY OF THE WORLD'S STRUGGLES.

By S. W. FULLOM,

AUTHOR OF "THE MARVELS OF SCIENCE," &c. &c.

With Illustrations in Steel,

By JOHN LEECH.

"There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy."

SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

1854.

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AND CHARING CROSS.

THE GREAT HIGHWAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE RECRUITING SERGEANT.

ENGLAND, with all thy faults (and they are not a few), we love thee still! From the furthest corners of the earth we turn to thee, like the prodigal in the far country, as to our father's house, and, in all the world, find no spot so pleasant as our own sweet isle. Well might the returned wanderer, as he touched thy shore, kneel down and kiss the blessed soil; for it is as the cheek of our mother, and we love it with a child's fondness.

It was with some such emotions that Ernest found himself once more in the streets of London, though he was as broken in spirit, and almost as poor, as the spendthrift of the Parable. Only a year had passed since he quitted England, yet it had added an age to his experience, and made him, both in instinct and feeling, a sadder and a wiser man. His disposition, however, had undergone no change, and he was the same kind, frank, forgiving, confiding fellow, as on the morning he left Glynnellan. The first great wave of trial had broken against the bark of his life, washed over his breast, and stirred him to the soul ; but the vessel, though strained, remained intact, and still laboured on its way. Perhaps it was well for him that the exigencies of his situation in some measure diverted his thoughts from the shock he had received, obliging him

to devote himself assiduously to one object, the pursuit of the necessities of existence. And sad it was to reflect that all his diligence, maintained so steadily and perseveringly, seemed thrown away!

In despair of obtaining any other occupation, he had once more taken up that which indeed he loved best—his pen. Present subsistence being his aim, his efforts were directed, in the first instance, exclusively to the periodicals, and night and day he toiled without ceasing in the desperate task. It was the same old story of the labours of Sisyphus, ever rolling the stone up, up, only to see it fall again to the bottom. His papers were perpetually returned, but it did not occur to him, in his ignorance of magazine usages, that they were never read. He still worked on, with hope deferred, with a doubting spirit, but with unabated per-

severance. Literature had thrown her iron yoke upon him; and who that has once been her slave, can ever shake off her fetters?

Without connexion, without friends, without introductions, he had embraced a profession which, more than any other, essentially demands these adjuncts. What was the light of his talents, if it was hidden under the bushel of his obscurity? What was his diligence, his energy, his daily and nightly toil, if the field which he dug with such unwearied and unre-mitted industry, never caught the sunny glance of a publisher? Too late he discovered, like many another aspirant, that if there is no royal road to fortune, there is certainly one to fame.

Failure was not the severest lesson of this hard school. What most tried him was the suspense—the cruel alternations

of hope and fear, invariably entailed by each new venture. When, far in the night, he sought his pillow, it was not to sleep, but to weigh again and again the chances of success, to think over different passages of the paper despatched, to view each thought, each expression, with a critic's eye, till his head ached, and his brain whirled, in the ascendancy of the one idea. Frankenstein was not more haunted by the monster of his laboratory. If it was with him like a ghost at midnight, it dogged him like his shadow at noon, pressing itself continually upon him, in his reveries and in his walks, in solitude and in the midst of a crowd, a mania, a frenzy, a madness.

And through all this stern trial he had to endure the constant pressure of indigence, almost approaching to want. His mind could not divest itself of the con-

viction, suspended like a sword over his head, that if he did not succeed, there was nothing before him but starvation. He thought of Butler famishing in a garret ; of the boy Chatterton perishing by his own hand. Was he, yet in the first flush and vigour of life, to add another name to the Martyrs of Literature ?

They tell us to keep such pictures to ourselves—to draw a veil, as it were, over the blotches of life, and show only its comeliness. Ensconced in a snug chamber, with the ruddy claret at hand, the fire brightly glowing, and the curtains closely drawn, we execrate the very name of suffering, if it comes betwixt the wind and our placidity. Tell us not of our brother shivering without ; of our sister, with the infant on her drained breast, dying of hunger ; but carry us into the groves and high places of Mammon, and pro-

phesy smooth things. This is the way to show the very age and body of the time its form and pressure. It was thus that Shakspeare taught, that Dryden sung, that Fielding drew.

But, very worthy and approved good masters, your benignant faces, shining with the ruby glow of self-indulgence, will not light up the world; and so long as such as you hold sway, it will be full of violence, wrong, sorrow, oppression; and crime. You are right to shut your ears to the voice of human sympathy, for it would but ruffle the down of your dreams, and grate on the stone of your hearts. Rather say, "Soul! thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry."

The wise heathen thought a good man struggling with adversity a sight worthy of the gods; but our modern Egyptians

adopt another creed, and pronounce it an abomination. Be it so, yet we may learn, in the example of such a life, a nobler lesson than all their philosophy can teach, and though the study may cost us a pang, time spent in such a way will not be lost.

Ernest had one great essential to success in his perseverance. Failure, rejection, disappointment, again and again repeated, depressed, but did not daunt him. In the fever of suspense, in the despair of repulse, even in the awful presence of want, he still persevered. In any other calling this would have been a stepping-stone to fortune. But the open-sesame to the cave of literature (temple we cannot call it) is not perseverance, not talent, but CONNEXION.

At length, the crisis which had long stared him in the face fairly arrived. His

resources, eked out by the usual means, but with unequalled care, providence, and frugality, were exhausted; and the long, terrible, agonizing struggle must now be relinquished. He went out. He walked through the streets like one blind and deaf, seeing nothing, hearing nothing. A timid hand touched his arm, and a haggard, half-naked being, the very form and image of Want, implored his charity. What bitter words rose to his lips!—rose, but found no utterance. Already the humble mite was drawn forth, and deposited, with a look of commiseration and pity, in the outstretched palm: it was his last.

Unconsciously he wandered to the Horse-Guards, and here, for the first time, began to note the objects around. The busy crowd in the street—the mounted warriors at the gate (loadstar of every

passing fair one)—the venerable old clock—the court-yard and its booted sentry—the lurking detective, in his velveteen shooting-jacket, looking the picture of simplicity and innocence—all, in turn, caught his glance, as he seemed to shake off his abstraction. But it rested longer on a knot of three or four soldiers, in different uniforms, but all equally gay, who were talking together in the gateway, and whose streaming ribbons announced a connexion with the recruiting departments. In a few minutes the party walked away; but one of the number, a very dashing young fellow, but an extremely old soldier, presently took leave of his comrades, and sauntered carelessly back, having noticed something in Ernest's appearance that looked like business. As he passed by, he suddenly dropped his free and easy air, assumed an alert car-

riage, and made the military salute. Ernest was quite astounded.

“ A beautiful morning, Captain,” said the Sergeant.

“ You are under some mistake,” replied Ernest.

“ Aint you in the service, then, sir ?” rejoined the Sergeant, with a stare of his large spherical eyes, which told on recruits like bullets.

“ No.”

“ You do surprise me, sir. Why, you’ve the very cut of an officer. Bred at Sandhurst, I suppose, sir, and looking after your commission ?”

“ I wish it were so.”

“ Then so do I, sir, and I’m glad you’ve got the inclination, for you’ve the makin’ of a fine soldier, and if I’m any judge that’s what nature cast you for. It’s a pity you aint an officer, for I can see

you've the sperit to be an honour to any corps. But as to that, even supposin' you was to 'list—a thing I'd never recommend you, though we've got vacancies for a few choice young men—but, I say, even supposin' you was to 'list, you'd soon have the three stripes on your arm, and I'd suffer death or any other punishment if you hadn't a pair of epaulets on the first opportunity."

"I thought promotions from the ranks were of very rare occurrence," said Ernest, becoming interested.

"Quite a mistaken notion, sir," returned the Tempter, smiling at his ignorance. "As you've no thoughts of 'listin', I can tell you what I wouldn't say to every one for fear of being charged with *inviglin'*—there's every inducement now to a young man to enter the army—that is, if he wants to get on. I won't say a word of

the honour of serving her Majesty, because some don't care about that—although,” (and the Sergeant drew himself up) “I do. I won't brag about glory, though I'd rather part with my life than this”—and he touched the silver medal on his breast—“but the chance of rising to be an officer, perhaps a General (I could mention several who have) is, let me tell you, a very fine thing, sir.”—The Sergeant produced a handsome snuff-box, and tendered Ernest a pinch.

“If I thought such a prospect was open,” said Ernest, “possibly I might be induced to enlist.”

“Ah! then I've done,” rejoined the Sergeant. “We'll say no more about it. No, if a young man takes the Queen's shilling from me, he takes it of his own accord, not by my persuasion. I'll never *inviggle*—not for all the smart-money in

the Pay-office. But if you hadn't mentioned *that*, I could have put you on the right track. Why, there's our regiment is in India now at this present time—there's an opening for a young man! Think of goin' into battle, and capturin' a stand of colours, or p'rhaps a gun, and Lord Gough ridin' up, and givin' you a commission on the spot. Then your name's mentioned in the despatches—even privates are mentioned now. Why, sir, for a young man of *sperit*, more especially if he's a smart, clever fellow—such a one as you are, for instance—the army's the only place."

"I wonder you've not been made an officer yourself," remarked Ernest.

"Well," returned the Sergeant, with a merry twinkle of his eyes, "*it is curious*. But, to tell you the truth, I haven't got the advantages of some. If I was like

you now, a gentleman's son—for I'm sure that's the case—I'd have been an officer long ago. In fact, I'd feel so sure of it, that if my governor was to offer to buy me a commission, I'd say 'no, let me 'list!' For, mind you, it's a great point for an officer to have been in the ranks; he knows then the feelings of the men, he understands his duty, and he's always the best drill in the corps."

"But the drill takes a long time to learn, does it not?"

The Sergeant scouted the idea.—"Why, what is it?" he said. "It's as easy as merry-go-one. I'd put you through your facings in a week; then, as for the evolutions, another week 'ud make you as right as ninepence. There's your manual exercise complete! The firelock's just as easy. Shoulder arms, carry arms, ground arms, reverse arms"—he did it all with his cane

—“fix bayonets, make ready, present, fire!
Can any thing be simpler than that?”

“I confess it seems simple enough.”

“Well, that’s all we have to learn—that’s the exercise that makes a clodhopper as straight as a ramrod, and turns a chimney-sweep into a buck. Ah! a soldier’s is the life, after all. He has his grub found him, a good house over his head, a red coat on his back, and a shilling in his pocket. When his duty’s done he goes out like a gentleman, enjoys himself as he pleases, and it’s his own fault if he hasn’t got half-a-dozen girls runnin’ mad about him. And they won’t follow the regiment, when it marches out for exercise, with the band playin’ before it, and the colours flyin’ in the middle—oh, no! not in the least!”—And the Sergeant winked his eye.

“I’ve always had an inclination for the

army," observed Ernest; "but what would most influence me just now is the possibility of raising myself, by attention and good conduct, to the rank of an officer. I'll think over what you have told me, and speak to you again about it. Can you mention any place where I could see you this afternoon?"

"Why, not exactly," replied the Sergeant, who, as an old soldier, knew that a recruit in hand was worth a regiment in the bush. "We've such a few vacancies in our corps"—it had just been decimated in India—"and so many applications, that I'm obliged to make short work of it. But I've took a fancy to you, somehow; and I'll tell you what, if you're really thinkin' about it, I'll break through my usual rule, and talk it over with you. I'm obleeged to go to the office in Duke-street; so suppose we just take a walk

across the Park, and *I'll give you my advice.*"

"It's very kind of you, I'm sure," said Ernest.

"Well, it's short and sweet," returned the Sergeant, as they walked away: "it's 'list; that's all. Let me give you the shilling—her Majesty's likeness in silver, which she orders to be presented to every recruit before he goes up to be 'tested."

"Why, you're never going to enlist," said a familiar voice—and Ernest felt a hand laid on his arm.

"Parkyns!"

"Yes! what are you thinking about?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the Sergeant, rather sternly; "but I must request you not to interfere between this young man and me. I beg to say—"

"Never mind," observed Ernest. "Since my friend has come up, I should like to

take his opinion on the subject. If I decide on enlisting, I will meet you here again to-morrow."

And he walked off with Parkyns.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" muttered the Sergeant, looking after them. "Every bullet has its billet, and a miss is as good as a mile."

CHAPTER II.

MEN OF LETTERS.

“I’M rather in a hurry,” said Parkyns, as he took Ernest’s arm, “for I’ve got an appointment, but we must have a glass together. Suppose we go into Macgregor’s.”

“Where’s that?” replied Ernest.

“Why, I thought everybody knew Macgregor’s,” answered Parkyns, with his old childish laugh. “But it’s close by.” And he pointed out the well-known canteen, which the broom of improvement has since swept away.

They entered, and sat down in the coffee-room.

"Now, what will you have?" said Parkyns: "a drop of the celebrated mixture? We can't chalk it up to the G. H. R." And the laugh came again.

Ernest declined taking anything.

"That's not sociable," returned Parkyns. "*As a gentleman*, I am entitled to offer you this hospitality; and you, as a gentleman, should receive it. But what's the matter with you? you look as if you could n't help it."

"I'm afraid I can't," said Ernest, recklessly.

"And so you were really and truly going to enlist, then?" replied Parkyns, his thoughtless nature touched by Ernest's manner. "'Pon my word, I half thought you were joking. But I'm surprised such a clever fellow as you can't make a do of it."

“I’ve tried hard, but, to say the truth, I don’t know what to turn to.”

“Have you ever tried your pen?”

“Do you mean as a clerk?”

“No, as an author: that’s what I’m doing.”

“You!” exclaimed Ernest. And he glanced at the strange figure before him—the tall, gaunt form, the threadbare coat, the well-worn drab trousers, running half-way up to the knee, and the indented hat, which, after every allowance for the habits of the individual, left a large margin to the credit of poverty. He was, indeed, an eloquent representative of the literary hack.

“Yes, and I do pretty well, considering,” said old Parr—and he looked *very* old just then.

“What are the titles of your works?”

“Oh! I haven’t come to that yet. At present I only write for the periodicals,

and chiefly for the *Fashionable News*. I'm going to meet the editor now."

"The editor," said Ernest, regarding him with involuntary reverence. "Do you know him personally?"

"I'm his most intimate friend," returned Parkyns, giving free rein to his imagination: "more intimate with him than I ever was with yourself. He calls me old Parr, and I call him Bobby; and, in fact, I'm more the editor than he is."

"I could almost envy your success," said Ernest. "I've been writing a long time, and have never obtained the smallest encouragement."

"You *have* tried it, then, have you? What have you been working at?"

"The magazines."

"What interest have you there?"

"Oh, none! I only sent in my papers."

This was too much for old Parr. His

simple, childish giggle, usually so faint, expanded into a roar, and he laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Why, I never thought you were such a griff, Glynn,” he said. “Don’t you know the mags are all close boroughs—at least, where they pay. There’s nothing done, my boy, without a friend at court. In literature, more than in anything else, kissing goes by favour!”

“Perhaps, some of my papers might have something in them, then?”

“I shouldn’t be at all surprised,” answered Parkyns, with the air of a first-rate critic.

“I wish I could have your opinion,” returned Ernest, anxiously. “I’ve got one in my pocket now, which was returned to me this morning. Will you look at it for me?” And he produced a packet of manuscript.

“I haven’t any time to spare,” said Parkyns; “but come, let’s see it.”

He took the manuscript, and cast his eye over the first few lines with a supercilious look, but, as he read on, the expression of his face, to Ernest’s great joy, began to change. In truth, he was too good a judge not to observe, with but very little scrutiny, the quaint style, the picturesque diction, the freshness and piquancy of thought, which characterised every sentence of the little story.

“This will do,” he said, at length. “It’s all your own, I suppose?”

“Oh, of course,” said Ernest, a little hurt by the question. “Every word of it.”

“And the fools sent it back to you—such a paper as that! Well, I’ll get rid of it for you.”

“My dear Parkyns, do you really think you can?”

“You wait here till I come back,” answered Parkyns, thrusting the paper into his pocket.

He tossed off the remainder of his mixture, wiped his mouth with his coat-sleeve, and hurried out.

Ernest sat still a moment, all his old hopes, his old fears, kindling within him. He was once more plunged in the cauldron of suspense. Had Parkyns judged too favourably? Had he, after his old habit, overrated his influence with the editor? Was there, at last, a possibility of one of his papers being looked at? Such were the thoughts which whirled through his poor, anxious, distracted mind, stretching it anew on the cruel rack of apprehension and expectation.

The time moved at a snail's pace, or rather seemed to have come to a dead stand. He took up the newspaper, and

tried to feel an interest in the events of the day. But what were the world's doings to him?—to the literary aspirant, awaiting the momentous sentence of acceptance or rejection! And with what imposing attributes did he invest the Judge, the editor of that trumpery *mé-lange*, with its miserable twaddle of dead-and-alive tales—an excrescence of the press, with which it had no sympathy or affinity.

At length, Parkyns returned.

“ Well,” said Ernest, breathlessly, “ how have you succeeded?”

“ He wasn't inclined to take it,” answered Parkyns, “ as he's so full; but I said, ‘ come now, Bobby, the author's a particular friend of mine, and I give you my word, as a gentleman, it's an uncommon good thing;’ so after a little parleying, as a favour to me, he accepted it.”

“How can I thank you?” said Ernest, gratefully.

“Oh, never mind,” returned Parkyns, carelessly. “The fact is, he wouldn’t give much for it, but I thought it was better than nothing, so I made him fork out at once, and I’ve brought you the cash. He’s given me an order for another on the same terms, if you like to write it.”

“I shall be only too happy.”

“Fifteen shillings is the price,” pursued Parkyns, producing the money.

“Thank you, thank you,” said Ernest. “You are the best friend I have in the world.”

Parkyns felt a twinge in his breast at these words, knowing that, under the specious mask of friendship, he had taken care to stop five shillings for his trouble. Such are the friendships of our every-day world!

CHAPTER III.

NEWSPAPER WORK.

THE first money we have ever earned with our pen! Can it be forgotten? Is it the same as other money? Or do we estimate it, in our delirium, by the hours of toil and trial and pain, the nights of fever and study, devoted to its acquisition?

Ernest clenched it in his hand as if it were the wealth of the Indies. His step, lately so faltering, now scarcely touched the ground. He hurried along the streets in a wild tumultuous, hysteric ecstasy. But a better feeling was in his heart—a

feeling of fervent, devoted thankfulness to the Giver of all good and bounty.

To work that day was impossible. His mind, like an exhausted soil, refused to yield its fruit. Nor could he divert his thoughts from the great incident of the morning. To his sanguine eye, it was the teeming branches of grapes from the Land of Promise. In imagination, he lifted up the veil of the future, and reckoned the unhatched fortunes of years to come. All difficulties, all obstacles, all fears had vanished, and, now that he was really on trial, he felt like a giant for the work. Wretched dupe! he had far better have taken the Queen's shilling from the Sergeant!

What need to follow him through the long, dreadful struggle on which he had entered—the sufferings, humiliations, privations, the heart-burnings and disap-

pointments, the task-work and drudgery, which pave the approaches to Parnassus ! Often eking out a bare subsistence, often without food, dependent from day to day on the chance of a job, yet ever working harder than the humblest stone-breaker, he saw nothing before him but penury, misery, and despair. At length, he obtained, by mere accident, an engagement as sub-editor on a weekly newspaper—one of those hash journals, which, having neither circulation nor character, endeavour to sustain a feeble existence by incorporation, as it is termed, with two or three other leviathans of the same stamp, thus adding a sprinkle of their readers to its own. The particular paper in question was a perfect cannibal in this respect, having swallowed at least half-a-dozen of its kindred, changing its name with each morsel, till, at last, under the taking de-

signation of *The Sovereign*, it had lost all currency. Notwithstanding its royal title, it was under the government of a triumvirate, of whom one, the most responsible of the three, filled the office of publisher; another, collected advertisements, and the third was the nominal editor.

The journal had a sort of unacknowledged connexion with half-a-dozen other small fry, which were all printed together in one of the back courts of Fleet-street, at an office known in the trade by the name of the Slushpot. This *soubriquet*, first applied by a satirical compositor, admirably typified the mode of business, which was rather peculiar, the type used for one paper serving ultimately for the whole, being transferred from one to the other in succession, so that, in fact, the news in each journal was the same, while it preserved its own set of leaders, critiques,

and advertisements. Thus, by mutual accommodation—by constantly borrowing each others' vitals, these half-dozen cripples were able to hobble on together, when they would have died of inanition alone, and circulation was not of much consequence when the printing cost a mere song.

Ernest soon found, on his induction to office, that the whole getting-up, arrangement, and editing of the paper was to devolve upon him. The nominal editor, indeed, was a mere sham, never contributing the least assistance. His editing consisted in securing all the perquisites, privileges, and prerogatives, in appropriating the books and orders, in taking advantage of Ernest's necessities and inexperience to defraud him of his undeniable rights. It is scarcely credible, in an age like the present, that men can practise such

tricks on even the humblest member of the press, as if they could forget, in their brief moment of authority, that a time may come when they will be held up to public execration, or owe their escape only to the clemency, the forbearance, and the compassion of their victims.

The duties of a sub-editor, mechanical as they may seem, are at all times arduous, even when each department of the paper is separately filled, but *The Sovereign* having to supply the raw material for its five confederates, those of Ernest were especially severe. The compilation of the foreign intelligence, and the summary of debates and meetings, the selection, abridgment, and reconstruction of paragraphs, and the condensation of general news, tasks requiring so much tact, judgment, and dexterity, formed but a small part of his labours, and, in addi-

tion, he had to supply critiques on the theatres and exhibitions, reviews of books, the city article, and the leaders. In return, he received a weekly stipend, something less than the wages of a coal-porter, a portion of which, as there was an Austrian deficiency of coin, was to remain in the hands of the editor till the end of the quarter, and be paid at quarterly periods.

It was not till the close of the week, about two hours before the time of publication, that Ernest learnt, to his surprise, that he was expected to furnish the editorial articles. The intimation struck him with a panic, as the printer was already dunning for copy. But Ernest's equanimity, at first so startled, was restored in an instant. He sat down, and with his whole mind concentrated on the subject, with his ideas ranged in unbroken

sequence, with his feelings and sympathies alert as his thoughts, he threw himself into the task like one determined to conquer, or fail for ever. And an inspiration was upon him ! Thoughts streamed into his mind like light, words flew from his pen like fire : the apt image, the flashing metaphor, the graphic illustration, applied with a force and address that surprised himself, followed each other with singular fluency and rapidity. Nor had he a moment to lose. Each three or four lines, as he threw them from him, were borne off by the printer's boy, whose place was immediately taken by another, impatient to seize the next instalment. And Ernest dashed on, all his energies aroused, all his faculties braced up—self-sustained, self-reliant. Not till his task drew to a close, did he begin, like a tired swimmer nearing the shore, to feel the chill of exhaus-

tion ; but mustering all his strength, he made one grand effort, and finished. Then he sprang from his chair with a weight off his heart, but dizzy, bewildered, and understanding what it was to write against time !

The labour of one week was but a rehearsal of what was to be done in the next ; but Ernest, having once put his shoulder to the wheel, resolutely persevered, and endeavoured to raise *The Sovereign* out of the mire of its ill-repute. Nor were his exertions without effect. Gradually, though slowly, the paper began to acquire a better name ; the vein of originality in its articles was seen and recognized ; paragraphs were quoted from its columns into the provincial journals ; and the circulation, so long depressed, showed, at last, a decidedly upward tendency. But such a result could not be

achieved without prolonged and unre-mitted efforts ; and those efforts, engrossing and exhausting every energy and faculty, were a strain that few minds could bear. Ernest's gave way. That most terrible visitation, which unhinges and dislocates the whole system—which gives a mercurial vitality to the thoughts, at the same time that, by a strange incongruence, it perverts, distorts, and confounds them : which changes the substantial marble of dome-capped temples, and gorgeous palaces—nay, the great globe itself, into mist and shadow, making all things indeed dull, flat, stale, and unprofitable—that leprosy of the soul, Hypochondria, struck the young man down !

The dark spirit that haunted Israel's King was not more malignant, or more insidious, than that which now preyed upon Ernest. It seized on him in every

place, and at any moment—in his office, in the street, at the play-house, in his bed! He would rush from the theatre, when the house was in a roar, to muse in the grave-yard of his own imagination; at the dead hour of night he would start from his pillow, with the hand of his invisible tormentor fastened desperately on his throat. He longed for solitude, yet dreaded to be alone. HE WAS AFRAID OF HIMSELF. And yet the mind thus distracted and afflicted, must keep at work. Where could he look for help, consolation, support? The Tempter, ever at hand, was not slow to answer, and proffered the intoxicating cup. He must become a drunkard!

No! there was another source of strength and of reliance—the Throne of Eternal Mercy, and here, when every other hope had failed—when every aspira-

tion was withered and blasted, he could make his appeal in undiminished confidence. In vain rose the awful doubt, the sceptical suggestion: in this, at least, he was firm as a rock. The world might pass away: the Heavens might be changed as a vesture; but the Great Eternal, the Framer and Sustainer of all, would remain immutable, inscrutable, everlasting.

All this support was required, in his paroxysms of despondency, to overrule the promptings of his shattered nerves. And to render him, if possible, still more wretched, he was continually haunted by the reflection that he might any moment be superseded in the editorship of the journal, and thrown out of employment. Hence he redoubled his exertions to raise the character of the paper, which, after several fearful throes, now took a start onward, and showed a marked improve-

ment. At length, to the surprise of the quidnuncs, one of the editorial articles was quoted by a popular member in the House of Commons, and the next morning was reprinted in several of the daily papers. This was a moment not to be lost; and the proprietors, who were only waiting for a suitable opportunity, immediately entered into a negotiation for the sale of the paper. The “property,” as it was ironically termed, had been purchased with bills, which were now coming due, and the object of the proprietors was to sell the journal, while it stood well in public estimation, at an enormous profit, and take up the bills with the proceeds. That object was accomplished; and Ernest, through whose labour, industry, and talent the desired end had been brought about, was then informed that his services were no longer required.

Nor was this the darkest part of the transaction. The editor, as he called himself, having pocketed his share of the spoil, now sought to defraud Ernest of the balance of his salary; and it was only on the joint-remonstrance of his late partners, who, having no personal interest in the matter, were content to be honest, that he finally, after a good deal of grumbling, paid the sum agreed on.

Such is the fate of the unfriended man of letters! The prey of any heartless sharper who may pounce upon him, his talents, the noblest gift of God, are bartered for a mess of pottage, and when they are used up, or the purpose in hand is achieved, he is thrown aside, like a pen worn to the stump, as altogether worthless.

But is this law? Marry is it! CROWNER'S QUEST LAW!

CHAPTER IV.

AN ORIENTAL TRAVELLER.

IN Brazil, and other slave states, it is customary for the negroes to be brought up to some trade or handicraft, and when they have become proficient, they are let out to different traders, and their earnings paid over to their masters. A similar system exists practically in England in respect to a certain class of literary men—the negroes of literature, of whom, if it were possible to get up a meeting in their behalf at Stafford House, tales might be told as

harrowing, and quite as true, as anything in Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Into such a serfage the step from a broken-down newspaper was natural and easy. Ernest's reviews, though always written in great haste, had, by their tone and spirit, attracted the attention of a fashionable publisher, from whom he had received a letter of acknowledgment; and, finding himself out of employment, it occurred to him that here was the very quarter where he would be likely to obtain a permanent engagement. Accordingly, he presented himself at the publisher's office, where, after waiting some time, he was admitted to an audience, when he made known the object of his visit.

The great house of Mr. Edge was a regular book factory; and its clients being chiefly fashionable authors, whose literary plumes were all borrowed, nearly

every book Mr. Edge published was an imposture. He traded, not on the merit, but on the social position of his authors; and though one or two literary names appeared occasionally in his lists, this was merely as a mask, to cover the real and secret policy of the house. It was a maxim with Edge never to buy manuscripts, while people of fashion could be found to write for nothing, as such productions, on simply being reconceived, recast, and re-written, might be converted into most profitable investments. To do this dirty work, Mr. Edge kept a couple of the literary negro class—the slaves before-mentioned, who, in the fashionable season, were engaged night and day in reading, revising, and re-writing manuscripts, so as to put them into a presentable shape, and thus became responsible for more books than Alexandre Dumas.

As the dramatist hears his sentiments repeated on the stage by the most august characters, so these two poor journeymen, labouring unobserved and unknown, had the felicity of seeing their thoughts paraded to the world as the veritable ideas of Lords, Countesses, and Honourables, and it was amusing to see how eagerly the world bought up, devoured, and applauded the spurious trash. Now and then, when the prospect of profit was more extensive, an abler hand was employed; and straightway a work was heralded forth as the production of an illustrious personage, who had never seen anything of it but the proof-sheets. Very often the would-be authors brought their manuscripts ready prepared, ashamed that even the publisher should know how little of the work was their own; and then nothing was required but to fix a striking and attractive title.

Even for this miserable employment there were so many competitors (to such a lowest deep has literature sunk!) that Ernest's advances were very coldly received by Mr. Edge—a tall, white-faced, somnolent-looking man, between thirty and forty years of age—with dull, fish-like eyes, and a habit of blowing through his nose like a grampus, as if he had a perpetual cold: in reference to which characteristic, it had once been facetiously remarked that he was “very like a whale.” Mr. Edge, after a little conversation, was about to bow Ernest out, when he happened to remember a manuscript lately submitted to him, which, as the author was not a man of fashion, though one of wealth, had been returned, as utterly beyond the publisher's craft; and he generously suggested that Ernest should take it up as a private speculation, and if he

could make anything of it, bring it to him to publish. Ernest jumped at the proposal, and having received the author's address, hastened to make an offer of his services.

Mr. Lucius Septimus Greenfield, the person of whom he was in search, was the son of an opulent India Director, and on escaping from a great public school, where he had acquired a considerable knowledge of slang, and learnt to contemn and ridicule everything honourable and great, he had gone with his family to the East, returning home anything but a Warburton. In his own estimation, however, he was quite equal to the Worthy of "The Crescent and the Cross;" and, out of the sow's ear of his experiences, proposed to make a companion silk purse. It was rather high to soar, but the towering flight of the eagle seems as nothing to the goose.

The genius of Greenfield, so ambitious of literary distinction, was no less aspiring on certain other points, and he was especially desirous of becoming a character in the world of fashion—that social Eden, the perfumes of which were the odour of sanctity to the nostrils of Mr. Edge. In his anxiety to tread the sacred ground, he had taken an expensive lodging at the court end of the town—the first-floor over a shop, where he dissipated his ample allowance in Hansoms, and noisy night revels, besides keeping a box at the Opera, and buying no end of trousers, all of different patterns. Here it was that Ernest found him, in an apartment hung round with hookahs, pipes six feet in length, and other trophies from the East, and redolent of the fumes of Narghili; while the young man himself, crowned with an Ottoman cap, and wearing a pair of

Turkish slippers, was evidently suffering severely from a recent orgie of tobacco—a habit which, as an Eastern traveller, he felt bound to cultivate, though it by no means agreed with him.

Ernest, having presented the card of Mr. Edge, was received by the Oriental as an ambassador from a brother Pasha, and at once invited to take a pipe.

“Thank you,” he replied: “I have given up smoking.”

“Can any one give up smoking?” cried Mr. Greenfield, astounded. “I could n’t. It’s food and drink to me! Sometimes I smoke twenty of these large bowls in a day, and I’d never have the pipe out of my mouth if I could help it. I’m an awful liar, but this is as true as I stand here.”

“You must be a great smoker,” observed Ernest.

“ Loud—very loud, one of the loudest smokers you ever met, but in the East they’re all loud smokers. I’ve seen a little boy there, not higher than the table, smoking a hookah that reached across the street. It’s a beastly jolly place for smoking. Come, try a pipe.”

“ Thank you, I beg you’ll excuse me.”

“ You won’t? You need n’t fear this tobacco. It’s the best Narghili—as mild as milk, and is only made for the Pasha of Egypt. To tell you a secret, it was given to me by his favourite wife, Fatima, who fell overhead and ears in love with me. I’m an awful liar, but this is as true as I stand here. That woman was so jolly sweet on me, sir—’pon my word, it would have touched your feelings. It was loud—very loud.”

“ Indeed.”

“ Yes. But I see you want to come to

the manuscript. Your governor has changed his mind, has he?" -- And he put his fore-finger on the side of his nose.

"Do you allude to Mr. Edge?" asked Ernest.

"To be sure. He thinks I'm a griff, and so he's going to play off and on with me. Now at a word, will he give six hundred?"

"I must really place you right as regards my connexion with Mr. Edge," said Ernest. "I simply heard from him that you wanted some one to put your manuscript in order, and I have come to say I shall be glad to render you any assistance I can, if you haven't engaged any one."

Mr. Greenfield, who had been imagining a stratagem on the part of Edge, very complimentary to the merits of his manuscript, was rather chop-fallen at this ex-

planation, but his spirits immediately rallied.

“ Well the fact is, I do want somebody, for I haven’t time to go over it again myself. I’m writing so many things just now, and the papers are all bothering me to send them something. There’s a long letter of mine in the *Times* to-day, and I’ve got to write articles for two crack papers this week. Besides which, I’m writing a thing in *Punch*—the Story of a Feather.”

“ Is it possible?” exclaimed Ernest. “ I thought that was Douglas Jerrold’s.”

Mr. Greenfield laughed.—“ I set that about,” he said, “ I don’t want anybody to know I’m writing till I bring out my travels. It’s so beastly—people seeing you at parties, and pointing you out, and saying that’s the man who’s writing the Story of a Feather, Snob

Papers, and Jeames's Diary. I always lay them on somebody else. But do you think I shall be invited out much to parties when my travels are published?—because they'll have my name! Do you think people will be beastly loud upon me?"

"I really can't say," replied Ernest, unable to repress a smile.

"Oh, I shall, I know. People are sure to be after me. But what are you going to do it for?—it's no use sticking it on, for I can find out what's the usual charge."

Ernest coloured at the insinuation, and ashamed of the position in which he was placed, was about to bid the Oriental good morning, when a grim recollection of his empty purse, which had just yielded up its last breath of coin, rose, like a ghost, to forbid his departure. Fine feelings, alas! are not for the poor.

“ Will you allow me to look at the manuscript?” he said, without noticing the insult.

“ Oh, you may look at it, certainly,” replied the traveller, in his turn changing colour, “ but I’ve told you it’s in a rough state, just as I wrote it down in the desert, with the camel going at full speed. Of course, it’s nothing like what I could do, if I was to sit down and write it here. But, as I said before, the other things I’m doing won’t admit of that, and, besides, I’m bored with it, and what’s the use of money if it won’t save a man from being bored?”

“ Money will do anything,” said Ernest, bitterly, as he opened the manuscript, which Mr. Greenfield, still looking very red, had laid on the table. “ Oh! this will never do!” he added. “ I don’t know what to make of this!”

“ Which do you mean ? ” said the traveller, becoming a perfect poppy.

“ Such passages as these,” replied Ernest. And he read aloud—

“ Pompey’s pillar ! What a sell ! Name of Jones wrote across. Wrote “ ass ” underneath, and then cut in my own name in beastly loud letters . . .

“ Thebes ; another beastly sell. Old bricks and stones—mason’s yard. Looked in Warburton—humbug about antiquities. Had lunch, and voted Thebes an awful beastly sell.”

“ Why, I thought that was a jolly game,” said Mr. Greenfield, “ and quite equal to my Pips’ Diary in Punch. But you can alter it if you like.”

“ But every page is the same.”

“ Then what should a fellow’s book be about, if you don’t put such things down ? ” demanded Mr. Greenfield, reverting to the poppy condition.

“ You might put in descriptions of the place,” replied Ernest. “ That is what must be done.”

“ But you’ve never been there.”

“ But you have.”

“ Cut along,” said the traveller. “ I’ll tell you all about it, and you take my notes, and write the book.”

And thus the book was written ! For a few pounds—less than half the sum which a lawyer’s clerk would have charged for the mere transcription, Ernest agreed to write—it might almost be said to invent, a narrative of Mr. Greenfield’s visit to the East, in two ordinary-sized volumes—only stipulating, as he received so small a remuneration, that if the work should reach a second edition he should be entitled to a further payment, proportioned in amount to the sum given for the copyright. It was also agreed that the two volumes should be completed in six weeks.

The task undertaken can only be properly comprehended by one who has been

similarly employed; but the labour, the drudgery, the incessant application, harassing and distressing as they were, formed its lightest features; and Ernest was worried as much by the traveller as by his book. But all things come to an end, and, at the time appointed, the manuscript, now an entirely new composition, was consigned to the tender mercies of Mr. Edge, who, on looking it over, made an arrangement for its publication.

Mr. Lucius Septimus Greenfield, the anonymous author of the *Story of a Feather*, *Jeames's and Pips's Diaries*, the *Snob Papers*, and other notable productions, at length appeared openly in print, as the author of a book of travels in the East, to which he could lay similar claims of paternity. And the book had a run! The great object of his ambition, of which he had been dreaming ever since he left

school, was achieved; and there was an absolute rush upon him for parties, where, clothed in Ernest's skin, he passed for a real lion. Nor was this all. His friends, who had thought him a fool before, were now struck by his extraordinary talents; though so young, he was pushed prominently forward in life, and soon placed in a position he could never have attained by his own miserable pretensions.

And what was the recompense of the man of letters—the architect of so much good fortune? He received the first instalment of his hire; and when the second edition of the work was called for, published, and sold, putting a handsome sum into the pocket of Mr. Greenfield, the other stipulations of the contract were repudiated, and he was cheated out of his reward.

Such is the bubble reputation, which we seek at the critic's mouth!

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERIES OF LITERATURE.

BESIDES his famous ledger, Mr. Edge kept a book of smaller dimensions, known among the initiated as the "black book," perhaps in reference to its cover, but which, in a moment of convivial freedom, a wag of the establishment had designated "the book of all work," inasmuch as it contained the names and addresses of all such persons as were likely to do work under price, forming a sort of Caligula's list of victims—cheap printers, cheap engravers,

cheap bookbinders, cheap translators, and, last and least, cheap authors.

The parsimonious principle was carried out by Mr. Edge in all his arrangements. The paper-maker, insisting on a fair price, was required to supply the very cheapest paper; the printing was done in one of the suburbs by a cheap printer, who, employing only apprentices, of course did it badly; and the binder was paid at so low a rate, that the covers of the books, instead of being a good stout board, were little thicker than paper, falling off with a tumble. How the system was maintained in reference to authors has already been intimated, and it bore no less stringently on the literary *employés* of the establishment, who, though very severely tasked, received a remuneration barely sufficient for subsistence. In fact, the only thing appertaining to Mr.

Edge that was not cheap, was books, and for these he demanded famine prices.

One morning, Mr. Edge was engaged in turning over the leaves of the "black book," running his eye down each, as he came to it, with a searching glance. A hack of twenty years' standing, after labours which would have shamed Hercules, had just become blind, and Mr. Edge was under the necessity of parting with him: that is, of turning him out on the world, without any acknowledgment for his long and faithful service in the house, with himself and predecessor—to live or perish as he might. It was necessary to procure some one in his place who would be up to the work, and whose talents and appearance would reflect credit on the establishment; and Mr. Edge's fishy eye already rested complacently on the name of Ernest Glynn.

A brief note speedily brought Ernest to his presence. From his eagerness to obtain employment, Edge, strongly endowed with the faculty of seeing into a millstone, was fully aware of his necessities, and drove his bargain accordingly. It was arranged that Ernest, a gentleman, a scholar, a literary man, should give him his entire services for eighty pounds a-year—a sum which was afterwards raised to a hundred.

The duties exacted of Ernest for this magnificent remuneration were as onerous as they were manifold, comprising the conduct of an extensive correspondence with the clients and dependents of the house; the examination, revision, and RE-WRITING of manuscripts; the reading and correction of proofs; the invention of titles; the composition of prospectuses, prefaces, and paragraphs; suggestions and

advice on all occasions, at an instant's notice ; the management of literary negotiations, with the tact, dexterity, and *politesse* of Talleyrand ; and the reception of visitors. He was expected to be at the office early in the morning, and was sometimes detained till twelve at night.

The accession of an assistant with so much energy and industry, bent on fulfilling his duties conscientiously and well, was soon felt in an establishment where the literary staff were all underpaid, and, consequently, not much inclined for work. In a few weeks, long-accumulated arrears had disappeared, and Edge was able to dispense with the services of two more used-up hacks, whom he sent about their business in the usual way, putting the whole burden of three on Ernest, at a remuneration half less than he had previously paid to one.

But, though toiling so arduously at the

office, Ernest's labours did not end here. He wisely remembered, in the bitterest moment of exhaustion, that he was at that time of life when, if ever, he must endeavour, by extraordinary and unremitted efforts, to raise and advance himself in the social scale, and, for this purpose, must sacrifice every consideration of ease, recreation, and rest. Now committed to literature, nothing remained for him, in carrying out his object, but to take up his pen, and devote the hours which should have been given to sleep to renewed diligence and study.

The staple commodity of Edge was fiction, written, in the first place, by people of fashion, and afterwards touched up, or usually entirely re-written by literary hacks. As compositions, these fashionable novels, though often puffed off as the noblest productions of the day, were below

contempt, but, what was worse, they were offensive to morality and decency. Their invariable topic was either seduction or adultery, on which they rang the changes, from one chapter to another, in every form, and under every circumstance of aggravation. Aiming only to throw an interest over crime, they presented all the worst features of the French school, without its almost-redeeming talent; while, with all their jibes at the middle and humbler classes, they depicted life in the higher circles as something only to be equalled in the destroyed Cities of the Plain.

The principle on which these productions were published, in rapid and unbroken succession, was prejudicial alike to their authors, to the public, and to the interests of literature, the only individual benefited being Mr. Edge. Thus, in

many cases, the authors paid down fifty pounds towards the expenses of publication, when it was arranged that they should receive one hundred pounds on the sale of a stipulated number of copies, and one hundred pounds on the sale of a second specified number, provided such sales were effected within six months from the time of publication—one day later they were not entitled to a payment. In other cases, the agreement was the same, minus the exaction of a premium from the author.

The mischievous effect of such a mode of literary remuneration must be obvious. In the first place, the real literary man, the author by profession and genius, is almost excluded from the field, not only because he requires present payment, and cannot wait for contingencies, but because the deluge of shams poured into the market

by people of rank and wealth, who strain every sinew of influence and connexion to draw attention to their books, shut him out from the public ear, usurping the sphere properly and rightfully his. In the next place, such a system infallibly leads to chicanery, collusion, and fraud. As the sale approaches the number at which a payment is to be made, the first thought of the publisher, if he acts in the spirit of Mr. Edge, is how he can evade the liability ; and, to enable him to do this, he immediately takes measures, by dropping the appliances of puffing and advertising, to keep the sale such a number short of the point stipulated as will leave him his full profit, without incurring the risk of the slightest payment to the author. The author's tenure of six months having expired, and his interest being terminated, the advertising is renewed, and,

by this expiring effort, a few more copies pushed off at the full price of a guinea and a half, when the residue, disinterred from a recess in the warehouse, is sold at a shilling a volume, to a remainder book-seller, and by him dispersed among the country-libraries.

Ernest was too soon familiar with these lamentable and disgraceful statistics. Nothing daunted, however, he set to work on a novel, descriptive of such phases of life as he had himself witnessed, and illustrating the manners and characteristics of the day. It would be easy to say that the book was finished, and, on its publication, took the town by storm; but such triumphs, though they abound in fiction, seldom, if ever, occur on the great stage of the world. Between the conception and completion of Ernest's task lay an Alps of difficulty, which few would have attempted

to surmount. Returning home late from the drudgery, fatigue, and vexations of the day, he had to flog himself up to renewed labour, taxing faculties already overstrained, till, as night advanced, mind and body alike gave way, and he would almost fall from his chair from exhaustion. When he went to bed it was to feel that light, rising, whirling sensation in the brain, which seems the forerunner of delirium, or to be startled from his troubled sleep by a horrid nightmare, or, in his anxiety to be early at work, to wake up, perhaps half a dozen times in the night, thinking it was his hour to rise. That hour was four; and summer and winter—for this struggle was not for a day, but for a year—he rose with the same punctuality, fagging at his book till his daily duties called him to the office, where he got through his work with so much effi-

ciency and satisfaction, that the triumviri whom he had succeeded, though they had really been very industrious hacks, were only remembered by Edge as ingrates and impostors.

But the book was finished at last. Edge, less considerate than the slaveholders of the Western hemisphere, who allow their slaves to work, after the stated hours of labour, for their own benefit, heard of its existence with extreme dissatisfaction ; but, after raising every possible objection, was obliged, on receiving a most flattering report from an experienced reader, to arrange for its publication on the usual terms—which, precluded by his position from applying to any other house, Ernest was compelled to accept.

Who can tell what were his alternations of hope and fear, when the book, at length,

made its appearance, in all the honours of tea-paper and old type, bound in a cardboard cover! At first, indeed, it seemed that he would meet the fate common to the unknown, and fall still-born on the shelf; but the press, as a body, is just and discriminating, superior to the petty cliques and influences which hem in our purely-literary journals, and Ernest's book was received with a consideration which its publisher deemed the exclusive due of rank and fashion. To the surprise of every one, it was found that Edge had published a novel which a woman need not blush to be seen reading; that it was making its way without the agency of puffs and advertisements; and that, notwithstanding this success, its author was neither an Honourable nor a Countess.

One dissentient there was to the general

approval of the book. A journal called 'The Literary Sewer,' which, after wallowing for years in the mire of public contempt, had recently been bought out of the Bankruptcy Court by a small bookseller, was in the habit of attacking all the publications of Edge, because that worthy publisher, aware of its impotence as a literary organ, turned a deaf ear to its supplications for books and advertisements. Such are the sloughs through which we flounder to Parnassus, encountering, at its very base, some ruffianly footpad, who levies his black mail (black indeed!) on every comer, and, with his pen pointed at our hearts, demands—our advertisements or our reputation. 'The Literary Sewer' was one of the blots of Literature—sunk to such a depth of debasement, that no respectable publisher, having any knowledge of literary statistics, ever sent it his

books, and the reviews were written without this recognition, while its solitary page of advertisements was half made up of the announcements of its proprietor. From the verdict of such a counter-jumping Warwick, who had dubbed himself a setter-up and putter-down of authors: from his obscure print, with its sham advertisements, its fudge reviews, its scurrilous abuse of the weak and friendless, Ernest could have appealed to the great tribunal of the press—in a name to which it has never been indifferent, the name of justice, and by the sacred tie of calling and brotherhood. Such a step, however, was not needed, as the shots of the ‘Sewer’ never reached the large round target of public opinion, though Edge, after holding out a long time, finally came to a compromise, by which it was agreed that the ‘Sewer’ should have his advertisements

at half-price, as a decoy to other booksellers, and, in future, give available reviews.

But the favour with which Ernest's tale was received, notwithstanding the neglect of the usual appliances, now became a subject of real concern to Edge, who not only had before him the disagreeable prospect of having to make a payment to an author, but also the possibility that success might even tempt Ernest to resign his engagement, when, as he well knew, he would infallibly lose the services of his most efficient fag. But the means of preventing such a catastrophe was in his own hands. One of his decoy-books, the production of a deservedly popular authoress, was just ready, and this was immediately brought out, blazoned, paraded, and pushed in every direction, fully answering the purpose contemplated. Ernest's novel was irrecoverably swamped.

He is sitting alone in his dark chamber—with the dark past, and the darker future, as there is but too much ground to consider it, vividly present to his eye. Where now are the weary hours he stole from sleep, and where their fruit?—where all the hopes, dreams, expectations, that guided and sustained his useless efforts? The bold, manly heart, which, undaunted by adversity, had so long maintained its up-standing fight with the world—even the strong frame, is bowed and crushed: not by failure, no! but by injustice, trickery, and fraud.

A strange sensation seized upon him, as if his whole system, struck down by the sufferings of the mind, had received a simultaneous shock, paralyzing and prostrating it; and, with an instinctive foreboding, he put his handkerchief to his mouth: it was full of blood.

That blood cried to Heaven against some one, as surely as Abel's against Cain. Not for all your gains, Mr. Edge! would we have a drop of it on our souls!

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. DE BURGH'S BOOK.

It was thought, at first, that the stream of life was ebbing completely out, but Ernest possessed a robust constitution, and in a week, the danger was past, and he was again up. The surgeon, however, insisted on a fortnight's sojourn in the country, before he could return to business; and Edge considerately acceded to the arrangement, merely stopping his pay for the three weeks he was absent.

But we are coming on other events. Ernest, greatly benefited by the change

of air, had returned to the office, when, one morning, the clerk ushered into his room a lady of fashionable appearance, who had just arrived in her own carriage (a great recommendation at the house of Edge), and, advancing before her, presented Ernest her card.

“Mrs. De Burgh,” said Ernest, reading the name. “May I ask—.”

“Why, yes, positively it is,” cried the lady. “What an interesting fact! How do you do?”—And she held out her hand.

“Is it possible?” cried Ernest, in his turn surprised. “Miss Cramboy—that is, Mrs. ——.”

“De Burgh, if you please,” replied the quondam governess. “I have persuaded Mr. De Burgh to discard the odious corruption of Burge, and resume the ancient designation of the family. But what an

unexpected pleasure this is! And Emily will be delighted. How long have you been home from America?"

"Oh! some time—more than a year."

"And you have never come near us!"

"Why, I thought," said Ernest, looking down, and colouring a little, as he remembered the affront he had received from Mr. Burge,—“but there's no use reverting to what is past.”

“Yes, there is,” replied Mrs. De Burgh, laying her hand kindly on his arm—“when you have been wronged. I recollect now what I heard from Emily. But I will see to that—only tell me, did you, while you were in America, get made a medium?”

“Well, to say the truth—.”

“To say the truth, you never troubled your head about it. You may laugh, but”—and she sunk her voice to a whisper—

“ I could tell you the most astonishing things. But we shall be overheard. They’re all round us, everywhere; and they follow me about like a shadow. There, do you hear that tap?”

“ Was there a tap?”

“ Yes, but you didn’t hear it, I dare say. Mr. De Burgh never hears them, though they come to the head of the bed every night; but then he’s not a medium: that accounts for it. But what are you doing in this place?”

Ernest explained his position.

“ And do you know what has brought me here?” asked his visitor.

“ I hope it’s to give the world some production of your pen.”

“ You’re not so far out. What I have observed in reference to spiritual manifestations has induced me to turn my attention to astrology, and I have achieved

great success. To prove this, it is only necessary to say that I can tell you at once you were born under Aquarius."

"But are you sure of that?"

"Yes, you're subject to rheumatism."

Ernest laughed outright.—"This is most convincing," he said, "for just as you spoke, I had a most desperate twinge. But I'm very susceptible of cold just now."

"It's the influence of the constellation," said Mrs. De Burgh. "But, to go on with my story, I've written a book on the subject, which will require a hundred years' study for any one to thoroughly understand it. Since I have seen you, I must get you to look into it before I say anything about its publication. You'll do that for me."

"I shall be delighted."

"Thank you. You shall hear from me

about it. But now I must run home, and tell them I have seen you : so good-bye."

Ernest bade her a cordial adieu, though not till he had attended her to her carriage. An hour afterwards, a footman arrived with a note, bearing a seal of enormous dimensions, representing the De Burgh arms, and, breaking it open, he found it was from Mr. De Burgh.

CHAPTER VII.

A DINNER PARTY.

THE incident which had, in its results, converted Miss Cramboy into Mrs. De Burgh was, under the circumstances, a very natural one. Emily's education being finished, the governess, regardless of the entreaties of her pupil, and the representations of the ironmaster, insisted on taking her departure, when Mr. De Burgh had no alternative but to give up his oracle and counsellor, or persuade her to remain as his wife. It was a desperate resource, but the conjuncture was no less so ; and

Mr. De Burgh, after waiting till the twelfth hour, proposed, and was accepted.

He never had reason to regret the judicious step he had taken. The influence his wife had previously exercised, with such good effect to all, now became supreme, and in consequence, he found himself an object of universal respect. At the same time, her talents and agreeable manners drew around them a distinguished circle, which, sordid as he knew the world to be, his adored money had hitherto failed to attract.

On leaving Ernest at the publisher's, Mrs. De Burgh drove straight home, and made her way to the presence of her lord.

"Who do you think I have seen?" she asked, gracefully perching herself on a chair. "You will be charmed!"

"The Marquis of Bablington, ma'am," answered Mr. De Burgh, pompously.

“No!—oh, no!”

“Lord Brookville, ma’am.”

“Oh dear, no!”

“The Honourable Vincent Crane, ma’am.”

“No: better even than him—young Glynn!”

“Oh, indeed! He’s come to town, then? I thought he’d soon be up after us. His eye is on a certain person, ma’am—take my word for it; and a very desirable connexion he is. The Glynnns are proud, ma’am, and rich, too; but Mr. Wordley knows the value of capital. Money gets money. Yes, Mr. Wordley Glynn is a very excellent man, and will be worth a considerable sum at his uncle’s death.”

“I was not thinking of him. It’s his cousin I’ve seen—Ernest Glynn!”

“Oh!” exclaimed Mr. Burge, his face

extending to an unnatural length. “That young vagabond—a miserable, houseless, poverty-stricken fellow, cast off by his uncle, ma’am—completely. He’ll come to no good, ma’am, that scapegrace : not worth a farthing, I assure you.”

“My dear sir, you are quite mistaken in your estimate of this young man,” said the lady, placidly. “As to his poverty, I’m afraid it is not to be disputed, but he has talents, decided talents, and in the present day, they are preferred—it is hardly credible, but it is true—preferred in certain quarters, to money.”

“Impossible, ma’am !”

“I assure you, it is the case, not only because talent is more appreciated than formerly, but because the example of the Court has made it fashionable.”

“Then, do you mean to say, ma’am, that money is losing its weight in the

social scale?" asked Mr. De Burgh, with the air of an injured man.

"Mere money is, undoubtedly; but it has the power of making up for this, by surrounding itself with extraneous attractions. Wealth can still do much."

"Of course, ma'am. It's a fine thing, a wonderful thing!"

"No doubt it is, when properly used, that is, as you use it."—Mr. De Burgh drew himself up.—"You show your own judgment and discrimination," continued his wife, "by throwing open your house to every one who can present the introduction of merit, and you are visited and courted by the noble of the land, because they find here so many who are distinguished in literature, science, and art."

"You're a woman of very great feelings, ma'am," said Mr. De Burgh, approvingly.

"As to this young man," pursued Mrs.

De Burgh, "you should by all means take him up, both on account of his connexion with literature—for that is the profession he follows—and also as he is a Glynn. I know what you would say—that this might offend his uncle. But, my dear sir, what have you just very truly remarked—that the Glynnns are proud. Well, you must be proud, too: you must be independent. Mr. Glynn can't openly show offence at your evincing kindness for his nephew, and you gain golden opinions from all sorts of persons, by countenancing an unfriended young man, when, to all appearance, local interests should have led you to slight and repel him. Be assured, it will make some talk in the country, when people hear one of these proud Glynnns is a protégé of Mr. De Burgh's."

"Ma'am," said Mr. De Burgh, unable

to resist this logic, "your feelings are astonishing."

And, under his wife's direction, he sat down and wrote a polite note to Ernest, apologising for his abruptness at their last meeting, when he happened to be labouring under great irritation, and requesting the favour of his company to dinner on the following day.

Ernest arrived a little before the appointed time, and was shown into the ante-room, where Emily, for a wonder very early that day, was awaiting him.

The girl he had left a budding beauty was now a woman, in the first flower of her life; and Ernest saw, at a glance, that nothing remained of her former shyness, except such a shade as added piquancy to her charms. It was the soft, sweet violet, peeping out from the veil of its own modesty, yet with a look so bright, with

a smile so radiant, that the veil was not seen. And, through veil and smile and look, shone, like the violet's breast, the clear, fresh innocence of her mind.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, joyously, as they shook hands. "We have so often talked about you, and wondered when you would come back."

"You thought I should come back some day, then?" said Ernest, happier than he had felt for a long time.

"Oh, of course. The prince in the fairy tale came back, you know; and you set out on his principles."

"But he succeeded, and, judging from the fortune he made, he must have gone to California, instead of New York. Besides which, he always had a fairy to look after him."

"And you might have had a spirit, if you had taken mamma's advice, and been

made a medium. But she says you never troubled about it."

"Why, I believe, I'm out of the pale, as I've no faith."

"You're as bad as I, then; and she calls me a Turk. But how did you like America?"

"It's an extraordinary country, but more for the future than the present. Everything on the grandest scale—mountains, forests, rivers, and Niagara."

"Niagara must be sublime, yet how awful! I hardly know whether I should like to see it. And what did you think of the people?"

"They are brave, intelligent, persevering, and industrious; but the character of the nation is not yet formed. It will take a hundred years to bring all its elements into one mould."

"Just the time required to understand

mamma's book, though I am sure I should n't understand it myself in a thousand. I hope it will be easier to you ; for she says you are going to read it."

"She has promised me that pleasure. But here is Mrs. De Burgh." And the host and hostess entered together, just as several guests were ushered in. Mr. De Burgh, carrying out the suggestions of his wife, received Ernest with the greatest cordiality, presenting him to the circle as Mr. Ernest Glynn, of Glynellan, and nothing could exceed the courtesy and urbanity of the hostess, who, for the time, forgot even her philosophy, in her attention and consideration for her guests.

Ernest obtained from Emily some notion of the character of the assembled company, of which the most important, as well as most agreeable person, was the

Honourable Vincent Crane, a man of some literary taste, who, in compliment to his rank, was also considered a wit, and enjoyed an enviable popularity among literary and scientific men, for whose society he evinced an amiable preference. Next in consequence was Mr. Griffin, the member for Pinchborough, who was ambitious of an opportunity of bringing forward a motion in the House for raising a revenue from gas, but whenever he rose for this purpose, was always counted out. The Starchleys, "a talented family," who were always singing each other's praises, and a despondent-looking gentleman in a Byron collar, who wrote verses in albums, and called himself a poet, completed the party. One other guest, however, was still expected, and Mr. De Burgh's repeated references to his watch showed that he was considerably behind time.

“The reviewer is very late,” observed Mrs. De Burgh, aside. “By the way, Mr. Glynn, he’s a person you ought to know: all literary people should know each other.”

“It would be advantageous in some respects, certainly,” replied Ernest.

“This is a friend of Vincent Crane’s, who introduced him to us,” returned Mrs. De Burgh. “Mr. Crane knows every one, and every one knows him.”

“And every one likes him, too,” said Emily.

“Mrs. De Burgh, ma’am, do you think he’ll come?” asked Mr. De Burgh, *sotto voce*.

“I think so,” was the reply. “But as a literary man he is entitled to some indulgence. It’s scarcely possible he can have forgotten it. Doctor Johnson, who was also a great reviewer, was very absent,

but I never heard of his forgetting an invitation to dinner."

At this moment the servant announced Mr. Shakespeare Parkyns.

Ernest, whose eye was watching for the new comer, gave a start, as he recognised the well-known figure of Old Parr, dressed in a span-new suit of black, which, from its style and fit, had the appearance of having been fabricated at a certain noted establishment of Oriental origin.

The reviewer made his devoir with a majesty which astounded Ernest, and made a profound impression on the other guests, particularly the poet, who was observed to turn pale.

"Pray, Mr. Parkyns," said Mrs. De Burgh, "let me introduce to you a fellow-labourer in the great field—Mr. Ernest Glynn."

"Glynn, my—my dear sir," cried Par-

kyns, just escaping the more familiar salutation of "boy," which was on his lips. "How do you do?"

"You know each other, then!" exclaimed Mrs. De Burgh, as they shook hands. "This is a most delightful fact!"

Dinner was announced; and Ernest, who had been hoping to take charge of Emily, was, to his great chagrin, paired off with Miss Letitia Starchley, through the dexterous management of Mr. De Burgh, who, while showing his guest every attention, kept a Shylock watch over his daughter.

"That's my brother sitting next to you," said Letitia, as she finished her soup; "he's *so* clever—such a talented young man! We're all so proud of him."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Ernest.

"Yes; he has such a genius for mathematics; it's quite astonishing. He won

a scholarship at Oxford for his mastery of Euclid, and he's now going in for Senior Wrangler. We look forward to his success as certain."

"That will be a high distinction."

"Yes; but it's extraordinary how hard he has to work for it—how he applies himself to it. He's as diligent as he is clever. We hope the greatest things of Bacon—that's his name. He's called after the great philosopher."

"Tish is talking about me, I know," observed Bacon, whose ear had caught the sweet sounds. "If she tells tales out of school, I shall inform against her."

"Now, don't, Bacon," urged Letitia.

"Why not?" said Bacon. "You ought to be proud of it! I'm sure I should be, if I could write verses like you. I should like you to see some of her poetry, sir. I assure you it's far superior to Tennyson's;

but Tish is such a modest little thing, she won't have it published."

"Because I know it isn't so good as you think," said Letitia, smirking.

"Come, Tish, dear, I won't have you say that either," cried her mamma, across the table. "Your uncle, who is a very good judge, said it reminded him of Wordsworth, and I think that is high praise—don't you, sir?"—to Parkyns.

It so happened that Parkyns had a crotchet on the subject of Wordsworth, whose poems, of course, he had never read.

"Wordsworth's a mere rhymester, madam," he replied. "His poetry is all one sing-song—words, words, words."

"Still we must take them for *words' worth*," observed the Honourable Vincent.—And all laughed at the simple joke.

"I take them for sound and fury, signifying nothing," answered Parkyns.

“There spoke the reviewer!” said Mrs. De Burgh. “You critics may be just to authors, but you are very severe.”

“It’s our vocation,” answered Parkyns.

“Parkyns *shakes spears* at them,” said the Honourable Vincent, eliciting another laugh.

“And do you never feel any qualms of tenderness, Mr. Parkyns?” asked Mrs. De Burgh.

“Never, ma’am. When I sit down to review a book, I am no longer Shakespeare Parkyns—I am no longer human—I become an ogre, a ghoul.”

The dinner went on—Parkyns, by his bold assertions and impudence, carrying all before him, so that even the Starchleys were fain to hide their diminished heads, while the gentleman in the Byron collar never opened his mouth—except for the purpose of swallowing, at one and the

same time, some good thing from his plate, and from the Honourable Vincent, or some terribly severe remark from Parkyns, whom, in the ardour of his imagination, he evidently regarded as a being who would grind his or any other poet's bones to make his bread.

The ladies having withdrawn, the gentlemen, on the suggestion of the Honourable Vincent, closed their ranks.

“A decided improvement lighting this room with gas,” observed Mr. Griffin, the member, taking advantage of a moment's pause. “It is impossible to estimate the advantages to be derived from gas, in its applicability to domestic purposes, if people would only be prevailed upon to use it; and, on the other hand, it might be made an important element in political economy.”

“From your remarks, I should imagine

the subject is at once luminous and *voluminous*," answered the Honourable Vincent, with his usual success.

"It is soon seen, sir," returned Mr. Griffin. "What are your figures? Let us take the population of England, and Wales at fifteen millions—that gives us five millions of adults or, we will say in round numbers, four million and a half of burners. There you have your raw material, and say a tax—"

"No, pray don't," urged the Honourable.

"You may conceive, perhaps, that so much gas cannot be produced," replied the other. "But this will be easy enough, when you've raised your capital."

"Very good indeed, sir," cried Mr. De Burgh. "Capital is a great agent, no doubt—a very powerful agent. In fact it's—"

“A capital thing!” struck in the pertinacious Vincent, setting the table in a roar, to the great discomfiture of Mr. De Burgh, who, deprived of his favourite theme, had no more to say.

Coffee having been served, Ernest was glad to proceed to the drawing room, where, despite the vigilance of Mr. De Burgh, he found a seat by the side of Emily.

“We have only just discovered you are an author,” said Emily. “Mamma has accidentally stumbled on an advertisement of your book. Why didn’t you tell us of it?”

“It was not successful,” answered Ernest; “and I hope to do something better.”

“But this must be good too, I’m sure; and I’m quite impatient to read it.”

“I shall scold you for not telling me of

this!" said Mrs. De Burgh, coming up with the Honourable Vincent—"Such an interesting fact!"

"It is painful to confess we have failed," replied Ernest, with a deprecatory smile.

"'Tis not in mortals to command success, my young friend," observed the Honourable Vincent, "but you will do more. I can see it in your face."

"And I'm sure you're a very good judge," said Emily, "and a very kind one, too. Yet I'm afraid you've been saying something ill-natured to Letitia Starchly. I saw you speaking to her just now, and she looked very vexed."

"I can't help it; she was so much on her old strain about her brother, and I merely observed that I didn't like *battered Bacon*."

"You cruel man! If you're so severe, I shall set you down for a reviewer."

Here Ernest, who was listening so eagerly to the old familiar voice, was seized by Parkyns.

“My dear boy, one word,” said the reviewer. “I’ve only just heard that book was yours. I ought to have known the name, but, confound it, there are so many Glynnns, and I never dreamt of you. Will you forgive me?”

“For what?”

“For writing that abusive and unjust review in the ‘*Sewer*.’ It went against my grain at the time, but I wrote it to order.”

“You. Why, I thought it was written by Flam, the bookseller.”

“He! psha! he can’t write half-a-dozen words. The reviews are given out as his, but they’re written by me.”

“Then, is this, too, a sham?”

“A most complete sham.”

“Why our whole literary system seems to be—”

“A sell,” interpellated Parkyns.

“A fraud,” said Ernest, indignantly.

“A swindle,” said Parkyns.

It was indeed so. But the voice so near, those long-lost but never forgotten tones, soothed the honest resentment swelling in Ernest's breast, carrying him back to other days—days of innocence, of bright anticipation, of happy ignorance of the world and its ways. They even seemed to seize his feelings at that moment, and to tell him, in accents almost reproachful, that if his present mode of life did, as he alleged, connect him with a system of deception—though his bread depended upon it, he should throw it from him, trample it under foot, rather perish than submit to it. And, as the thought settled in his mind, he felt himself a changed man,

relieved of a weight of depression, of despair—he almost feared, of GUILT! Already the yoke of Edge was off his neck, and he was once more virtuous and free.

As he passed down the stairs, on his way out, a bright form leant over the balustrade above, and, unseen, watched his descent. He mechanically looked up as he reached the hall; a fairy hand was waved; and with a new lustre in his eyes, a new vigour in his mind, a new life in his heart, he reached the street.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FICKLENESS OF FORTUNE.

THE eventful step was taken. A note from Ernest, resigning his post, but undertaking to complete all matters then in his hands, carried dismay to the heart (no! the scheming brains) of Edge. The worm he had thought to tread upon was Talent, and, lo! it had turned.

Nor was Ernest's situation long a precarious one. A friend, hearing of his emancipation, put him in the way of procuring an engagement on an influential journal, where his ability and industry

were immediately appreciated, and handsomely rewarded, while he had the satisfaction of seeing himself in the proud position of a gentleman of the press.

He had paid several visits to the De Burghs, but, through the dexterity of Shylock, had never enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* with Emily, when, one morning, calling rather earlier, he found her in the drawing-room alone.

“I’ve just finished your book,” she said, as he sat down. “I must tell you, I couldn’t go to sleep last night for thinking of it.”

“You’ll make me sorry I have written it, if that is the case,” replied Ernest.

“If you wished it to act as an opiate, you shouldn’t have made it so interesting.”

“Perhaps you would have recommended a larger infusion of dialogue, then, or a scruple or two more of sentiment?”

“ I should decidedly have recommended another volume, of exactly the same ingredients, and the same proportions. But how strange it is, to look back a few years, and think what you must have seen since, to be able to write such a story ?”

“ The book of my life is a far stranger tale,” said Ernest, with a touch of sadness.

“ And have you really met such people—such, for instance, as that beautiful creature Violet ?”—And she raised her eyes timidly to his face, with a half-averted glance.

“ Well, I have seen some one like her.”

“ And did she love Everard, and he her, as you have described. And is—is she dead ?” asked Emily, eagerly.

“ You want me to tell you all the mysteries.”

“ Of course.”

“Then, I have only to say this part of the story is a pure invention.”

“I’m very glad to hear it,” said Emily, her face confirming her words.

“And why, pray?”

“Because I should have been so sorry for her to have loved so, and then to have died. Why did you make her die?”

“The reason is obvious. If she had lived, she would have married Everard, and then they would have been happy.”

“That’s the very reason why you should have allowed her to live, you cruel man. But I do believe authors are as vindictive in their way as critics. To think of killing poor Violet!”

“It was unavoidable, as she was in love, and you know what Shakespeare says—the course of true love never did run smooth.”

“It must have been Shakespeare Par

kyns who said that; for the poet himself has made all his heroines happy at last. Are you going to teach us that love makes people miserable?"

"No, but it may make *some* miserable," replied Ernest.

"What a pity!" said Emily, with a sigh, as she observed a cloud on his face, though it instantly disappeared. "This would show our best feelings to be the sport of circumstances, so that we may be wrecked on the very shore we have strained every nerve to attain."

"But, after all, we may gain the heights overhead, and find they are the spot, above all others, where we would wish to be," replied Ernest.

And from his tone, from the altered expression of his features, and a sort of subdued cheerfulness in his manner, one might have thought that he was telling

his own history. Had he, then, after being dashed against the rocks of disappointment by the headlong surges of feeling, succeeded in reaching the pleasant uplands? Was the long night of his misery receding before another dawn? Could the soul, struck by the lightning of despair, again put forth the tender buds of hope?

Why not? If the flower blooms but once, the gentle rain, the soft and soothing air, the gladdening heat, by their united ministrations, give new life to the stem, and stud its restored mantle with fresh blossoms. Is human feeling less susceptible, less fruitful? Time, the truest Sybil, happily teaches a far other conclusion.

The first wild ecstasy of love, with its intoxication, its delirium, its frenzy, may be known but once, as we can but once know the vigour, the buoyancy, the trustfulness of youth. Let us but eat of the

tree of passion, and our innocence, like Eve's, is gone. But, even when we are driven from Eden, nature still leaves us, in the wide world of our mind, the same sensibilities, the same emotions, though they no longer spring forth untilled. We must emerge from the gloomy cavern of our meditations—perhaps our remorse, and come into the light and sunshine. Happiness is a coy maiden; she will not, like bolder nymphs, go seeking for suitors, but requires that they should seek her.

Ernest had awoke from his long and awful sleep, in which his heart and feelings had been as dead, while his body, the mere husk of clay, had retained all its vigour. The fresh, sweet innocence of Emily's thoughts communicated a new vitality to his own; the spell of her beauty fell upon him like a divine emanation; her

gentleness, her docility, her constant abnegation of self, shown by a thousand little accidents, won upon him with the stealth and the potency of magic. He found himself thinking of her more and more frequently—not as a goddess, not as he had thought of Clara, but as a being designed to shed peace and joy and love on all around her. And when he turned back to the period of their first intercourse—a period he had then thought so full of trouble, in connexion with the irritability and fretfulness of his uncle, but which he now looked upon as by far the happiest in his chequered life—she seemed to recur to him as his first inspiration to ambition and exertion, his first impression of womanly beauty, virtue, and truth.

Of those days they both spoke with an equal degree of pleasure; and Ernest, though he shrank from any direct inquiry,

contrived to ascertain from Emily that his uncle remained in much the same state of health, occasionally appearing abroad, but never mingling in society, while all his affairs, if report spoke truly, were managed entirely by Wordley. And Ernest thought he observed a strange hesitation in Emily's manner, whenever she mentioned Wordley's name.

Mr. De Burgh, after several days unremitting watching, suddenly relieved Ernest from surveillance, and absented himself from the house for a whole week, on business which appeared to occasion him intense anxiety. On his return, this, instead of being diminished, had evidently taken deeper root, and he evinced such abstraction and perturbation in his manner, that it even attracted the attention of the servants. At the same time it became generally known that he had

sustained an enormous loss by the collapse of a railway scheme, for the entire liabilities of which, it was said, he was held responsible. A reduction in his establishment followed, but from his still maintaining a large expenditure, it began to be believed that, after all, he had received only a severe pinch.

The family had just finished breakfast, a morning or two subsequent to these incidents, when Mr. De Burgh found an excuse for hurrying Emily from the room, and then handed Mrs. De Burgh a letter he had just received.

“From Wordley Glynn !” said Mrs. De Burgh, running her eye over the contents.

“Yes, ma’am,” answered her spouse ; “and you see the tenor of it. He will be in town this morning, he says, and will call here, when he hopes he may have a

conversation with me on a subject connected with his happiness. This admits of but one interpretation. He is going to propose for my daughter."

"Humph!" said Mrs. De Burgh, meditatively.

"The proposal is a most desirable one," pursued Mr. De Burgh, "for I fear this railway affair will turn out even worse than we expected, and in that case we shall have to put down our establishment, and go abroad for a time. I should like to see my daughter settled, ma'am, before it comes to that."

"Let us hope it will never come to that," replied Mrs. De Burgh, cheerfully. "The Indiaman will retrieve all your losses."

Mr. De Burgh ground his teeth.—"I beg you won't refer to the Indiaman, if you please, ma'am," he said, snappishly.

"Certainly not, if such is your wish.

I only mentioned it as something encouraging."

"It's very *discouraging* ma'am—most decidedly so."

"What, the Indiaman, for which you are the underwriter?"

"Yes, ma'am—that Indiaman—that rascally barge of an Indiaman, on which I have ventured my whole fortune, that Indiaman, ma'am—you won't believe it—no one would believe there ever was such a tub on the sea—ought to have arrived at Liverpool a month ago."—And Mr. De Burgh thumped his fist on the table.

"Is that all?" rejoined his wife, in the tone which woman's voice knows so well how to assume, when every other is desponding. "A month is nothing, considering the length of the voyage, the frequency of calms on the equator, the

variableness of the winds"—and Mrs. De Burgh was strongly tempted to enlarge on this subject, but checked herself—"two months hence, my dear Mr. De Burgh, would be quite time enough to be uneasy. But I hope before then your ship will be safe in harbour."

Mr. De Burgh felt exhilarated by such a cheerful prospect. "Ma'am, you're a woman of most astonishing feelings," he said. "There's great advantage derived from talking to a person with your feelings, ma'am."

"I only wish you not to meet evil half way; though, under the circumstances, I think it would be well to make some further reduction in our expenses, which we might easily do without attracting much notice."

"Well, not just at present, ma'am," returned the proud man. "The world is

looking very hard at us now, just as you look at a gnat on a microscopè. No, stop till my daughter is settled, and then we'll go to work effectually."

"But have you given Emily any hint on this subject? Do you think it is likely to accord with her feelings?"

"Her feelings, ma'am?"

"Yes!"

"Hang her feelings, ma'am! Not," added Mr. De Burgh, recollecting himself, "but what feelings are very good things in their way. I respect feelings; I admire and honour them. But this is a question of marriage—of fortune—in fact, of money. When it comes to that, ma'am—feelings or money?—then I say, money, money!"

"I see you have made up your mind," returned his wife, "and, therefore, it would be useless to discuss the subject. But I

imagine there are more difficulties in the way than you suppose."

"On the part of my daughter, ma'am?"

"Yes."

"Why, what does she want, ma'am? What can she expect? Here's a most excellent man—a man of wealth, or will be when he comes into his uncle's estate, and from whom I shall take care to secure a most handsome settlement for her. Tell her that, will you? And I'll give her whatever she likes myself, ma'am. Tell her that. Just remind her that it's simply a question of money—and connexion, too. Don't forget that. Why, ma'am, as Mrs. Wordley Glynn she'll be the first person in the county."

"I shall endeavour to reconcile her to your wishes."

"Very well, ma'am. After I have seen him, he'll, perhaps, wish to see my daugh-

ter; but you needn't leave them alone to-day. There will be time enough for that."

And with these words Mr. De Burgh quitted the room.

The lady sat still for a short time, absorbed in reflection. Then, ringing the bell, she directed a servant to request Miss Emily to come to her in her boudoir, and went there to meet her.

"Come and sit down by me, Em dear," she said, as her step-daughter appeared. "I have something very important to say to you."

"*Very* important, mamma?" replied Emily, twining her arm round her neck, and gazing affectionately in her face. "What can that be?"

Mrs. De Burgh passed her hand caressingly over the young girl's long silken hair, but with a look so different from

what she usually wore, that Emily felt at once an instinctive foreboding of something sad.

“ Dear mamma, why are you so dejected ?” she said. “ What has happened to distress you ? Pray tell me, for I can’t bear to see you so sorrowful.”

“ Sorrow is inherent to our condition, my child—a universal law of our existence. As such, I am always prepared for it, just ”—and she involuntarily recurred to a scientific illustration—“ just as I am prepared to see the planets sweep round the sun. Sorrow is the gravitating principle in our nature, which ties and fixes us to the earth and to each other. Let us regard it as a necessity, and we shall learn to bear it like philosophers.”

“ You know I can never be a philosopher, mamma ; but—”

“ You are a Christian, Emmy ; and,

compared with the philosophy of Christianity, my dear, all other is foolishness. That alone teaches us how to live—not for ourselves only, but for our fellow-creatures and for God; and you will remember Addison's last words to his pupil—'I have sent for you to see how a Christian can die.'"

"I remember them well, dear mamma."

"And what are a Christian's first moral duties?—self-denial and self-sacrifice. These we are constantly required to keep in view, and to practise: these are the distinctive characteristics of our religion, as they ought to be of our philosophy. That you know, Emmy."

"Yes," was the scarcely audible reply.

"And you are prepared to do it—to declare, by your conduct, that you don't live for yourself alone, but that you will sacrifice yourself, do violence to your own

dearest wishes, if your father, your duty, requires it?"

"Oh! what do you ask of me?" cried Emily, with a flood of tears.

"I ask you to do your duty—to do what I should have done myself at your age—what I did do, in a different way. I have never told you, Emmy, that I was once in love—that I loved one whom I thought honourable and worthy—who, in appearance, possessed everything our weak hearts covet, and that I loved him to madness. But I found he was but a poor painted worm. Duty commanded me to pluck him from my heart, and I obeyed."

"Poor, dear mamma!"

"I needn't tell you what that sacrifice cost me!" pursued Mrs. De Burgh, with a brave look, though her voice trembled. "At first, I suffered indeed; but, my dearest Emmy, the mind may always find

consolation—first, in religion, and then in the exercise of its own faculties, in the contemplation of the mighty works of Creation, in the beautiful arcana of science. These have been life and breath to me: they have often enabled me to shake off my mantle of clay, which pressed upon me so heavily; and stand before the majesty of nature in my untrammelled spirit.”

“But I can’t do like you, mamma. How can I, without your talents, your diligence, your perseverance? And what is learning, even if I obtained it, when peace and happiness are gone?”

“Peace and happiness are shadows. We are continually chasing them, but they are always at the same distance. Learning is a reality, because it belongs not to the body, but to the mind, and I have looked in and communed with it, when the whole world has seemed a blank. You may do

the same. Your papa is going to exact such a sacrifice from you. You know what losses he has sustained; and more, perhaps, are yet to come—more than I dare think of. Yet, in the midst of his trouble, he has thought of you, and desires to see you settled eligibly in life. There is but one course for you to follow: you must entirely comply with his wishes.”

“You haven’t told me what it is, mamma,” said Emily, in a choking voice—“and don’t, don’t tell me now. Let me think first—think of all you have said, of all you require of me.”

“Bless you, my child!” said Mrs. De Burgh, pressing her to her bosom. “You will do your duty, and may God give you strength to bear your burden.”

And with these words, she left the apartment.

As she was passing her husband's room, on her way down stairs, Mr. De Burgh was just coming out, but seeing her, he drew back, and requested her to enter.

"Have you been speaking to my daughter, ma'am?" he asked, rather anxiously.

"Yes," was the reply.

"And have you told her of Wordley Glynn's note, ma'am?"

"To do that in the present stage of the affair would be premature; but I have been preparing her mind for some such step, and, indeed, she appears to have an inkling of it herself."

"I'm glad of it, ma'am: it shows there's some foundation—something to go upon. But how does she seem to take it?"

"She is so docile, and so good, that I don't apprehend any serious opposition. But—"

"But what, ma'am?"

“ We must proceed cautiously and gently—very gently.”—And Mrs. De Burgh’s voice faltered a little.

“ Certainly, ma’am—certainly : such is my wish, and I leave it all in your hands. I can’t do better than be guided by a woman of your extraordinary feelings. Yet there’s one point I had almost forgotten to mention.”

“ What is that ? ”

“ Well, it’s the other Glynn, ma’am—the young man. I am aware of the interest you take in him ; and I respect you for it. But I’ve heard lately the reason of his dismissal from Glynnellan, and what do you think it was, ma’am ? ”—And Mr. De Burgh lowered his voice as he communicated the charge.

“ I don’t believe it,” said Mrs. De Burgh.

“ His uncle believed it, ma’am, and he

not only discarded him in consequence, but packed off the girl's father too."

"Still I don't believe it—for I have heard quite another version of the story from the schoolmistress at Bydvil. Some one has poisoned his uncle's mind against him, but, under present circumstances, we need'nt conjecture who it is."—And there was something of significance in her tone. —"Enough, we have no reason to doubt his innocence."

"But I've had my eye on the young man, ma'am, and I've observed he is very attentive to my daughter."—A shade passed over Mrs. De Burgh's face.—"I've observed she has shown a sort of—a sort of a fancy, ma'am, towards him; and I think it is time to put a stop to such proceedings, and decline his further acquaintance."

"That is the very way to bring about

what you fear, if such a disposition exists—which I confess I have never thought of. No, your daughter may now be brought to accede to your wishes, and you should let well alone. If you adopt this violent step, you may alarm her, and so defeat your own object.”

“ But if the young man takes advantage of his visits here, ma’am—and makes love to her—perhaps carries her off!”

“ He won’t do anything of the kind.”

“ I don’t know, ma’am. He knows she’ll have a large fortune, and to a poor man, money is a great temptation.”

“ To the poor and the rich too,” said Mrs. De Burgh, somewhat bitterly. “ But I will be responsible for Ernest Glynn. He will never propose to your daughter, while he is a guest in this house, till he has first spoken to you or to me.”

“ If you think so,” began Mr. De

Burgh—"but no!" he added, stopping short, "if he continues to come here, he will constantly be brought in contact with his cousin. That can't be."

"It must be, Mr. De Burgh," answered his wife. "Have you not already seen the importance of following my advice in this matter? Yet now, at a moment when you say the world is watching you so closely, you propose to take a directly opposite course. What would people say then? — naturally, that you were so anxious to catch his cousin, you forbade the unfriended young man your house, and they would seek for an explanation of this conduct in your recent losses. No, you must never give them such a handle as that."

"Never, ma'am—not for a thousand pounds!" exclaimed Mr. De Burgh, vehemently.

“ But what you have said respecting a probable attachment between your daughter and Ernest Glynn puts the whole question in a new light,” pursued Mrs. De Burgh. “ We are reflective beings, my dear Mr. De Burgh, but we are, to a certain extent, also beings of impulse—subject to certain instincts and sympathies over which we have little, if any, control. They are laws of nature, and her laws can never be violated with impunity. If Ernest Glynn loves your daughter, and she loves him, this new contract must not be proceeded with.”

“ Not proceeded with, ma’am ! Why not ?”

“ Because it is an outrage on nature, and, therefore, can only end in misery.”

“ If these are your feelings, ma’am, I despise them,” cried Mr. De Burgh : “ yes !”—But his soul quailed as he

raised his eyes to her face—the face he had looked up to so long as the bright, particular star which led him safely up the hill of the world's opinion:—"that is, ma'am, I should despise them if they were any one else's feelings," he continued, "but, as yours, I can only say I'm astonished at them—astonished."

Mrs. De Burgh inclined her head with a dignity not lost on the proud, but dependent man.

"Let me tell you, ma'am," he resumed, "I'm determined on this match. Till it is accomplished I shall know no peace, no rest. I will proceed gently, as you advise; I will continue to receive this young man, as you desire; but my fixed purpose is, that my daughter shall marry his cousin; and from this no power on earth shall turn me."

"I hear you, sir," returned Mrs. De Burgh.

As she spoke, a servant entered and presented a card.

“ Mr. Wordley Glynn has arrived, ma’am,” said Mr. De Burgh. “ As soon as I have seen him, I will bring him to you in the drawing-room.”—And he proceeded down stairs.

Mrs. De Burgh had been seated in the drawing-room but a few minutes, in expectation of the unwelcome visitor, when she was joined, not by Wordley Glynn, but by Ernest.

“ Who do you think I am expecting ?” said Mrs. De Burgh, after inviting him to a seat.

“ I can’t imagine !”

“ Your cousin Wordley. He is now engaged with Mr. De Burgh in the library, and will be here directly.”

“ Then I had better go.”

“ That doesn’t at all follow. On the

contrary, as you will have to meet him here some day, you had better do it at once ; for we're likely to see a great deal of him."—And her last words were uttered with a gravity that did not escape Ernest.

" I will stay by all means, as you advise it," he replied in an altered tone, and gazing very fixedly at the carpet.

" I will only ask you to remain till he comes in, that he may just see you visit us. But since we have touched on the subject of your family, my dear young friend," resumed Mrs. De Burgh, after a pause, " I will venture to ask you one question, which you may answer or not, as you please. Have you ever sought a reconciliation with Mr. Glynn?"

" I can have no objection to telling you frankly I never have."

" And why haven't you?"

“ Because he has treated me with so much injustice, although I did nothing to provoke it.”

“ Then he must have acted under some delusion, and you have only to furnish an explanation, to restore yourself to his good opinion.”

“ That explanation he scoffed at—nay, refused to hear,” said Ernest, his face kindling with indignation, as he recalled, only too distinctly, the insulting terms used by his uncle.

“ At the moment he might be too incensed to listen to you, perhaps,” replied Mrs. De Burgh ; “ but how do you know what influences had been brought into play to prepossess him against you—what circumstances had been adduced to pervert your actions, and to make your guilt appear indubitable? You should approach him now, when he has had time to ex-

amine these allegations, and see whether he will be more accessible.”

“ After his treatment of me, my dear Mrs. De Burgh?—his unjust and most cruel treatment, and after all I have suffered since !”

“ Yes. He is an old man, and your nearest relation on earth. Remember, it is nobler to forgive than to avenge.”

“ I seek no revenge—Heaven forbid !”

“ Is it not seeking revenge to embitter his last days with a false impression of your character?—to let him die, perhaps, under a dreadful apprehension that he may have done you wrong—when it is too late to make amends? Is this your philosophy, Ernest?—is this your religion ?”

“ Shall I say it is my weakness, my poor, miserable pride ?” replied Ernest, looking up. “ But, thank you for your

kind counsel. I will do what you say, let my uncle receive me as he will."

As he ceased speaking, they were joined by Emily; and Ernest, with misgivings already aroused, saw in her blanched cheek and drooping eye a confirmation of his worst fears. There was a tremor in her voice too, as she returned his greeting, and she sat down at a frame of Berlin wool, and began to work in silence.

"You'll blind yourself with that cushion, Emmy," said Mrs. De Burgh. "Hadn't you better put it aside for the day, dear, and amuse yourself with something else?"

"I assure you it doesn't distress me at all," replied Emily.

"It seems to be quite an elaborate composition," observed Ernest, with forced composure. "May I ask what the subject is?"

“ It’s the Master of Ravenswood rescuing Lucy Ashton,” replied Emily.

“ Poor Lucy !” exclaimed Ernest. “ That was a sad encounter for them both.”

“ You speak of this incident as if it had really happened,” remarked Mrs. De Burgh ; “ whereas we know it is only an invention, coined by the brain of the novelist.”

“ But we know also this same novelist drew his materials from nature—that the muse which inspired his imagination was the human heart,” replied Ernest. “ In such hands, a novel becomes a history, as surely as any chronicle of the day ; and we recognise the events it describes as things in life, though they may not be literally true.”

“ You are right to uphold your craft,” rejoined Mrs. De Burgh, with a smile ;

“and I am the last to say a word against it. But I should be sorry indeed to see works of fiction invested with the authority you ascribe to them.”

“I am far from saying they are invariably entitled to it,” returned Ernest; “but if, while presenting faithful pictures of life, they show us the suffering inflicted by wrong, or, at other times, the retribution wrong may bring upon itself, then they may be read as much for instruction as amusement. Such was the object always sought by Scott—such is the object kept in view, in our own day, by Bulwer, Dickens, and Thackeray.”

“I grant, vast good may be done by such novelists as they are,” said Mrs. De Burgh.

“I know no story of the kind so effective as the *Bride of Lammermoor*,” returned Ernest. “It shows us how a

young and innocent girl was sacrificed to the ambition and the prejudices of others—severed from one she sincerely loved, and to whom she was dearer than life, and forced into a contract as odious as it was impious. We see in her fate, and in all the calamities connected with it, a dreadful picture of the misery produced by such proceedings, and of what may be expected to follow them. Is not such a story at once a lesson and a warning?”

As he spoke, he looked at Emily, but she had bent over her work in such a way, that, sitting where he was, he could not see the tears trembling in her eyes; and before Mrs. De Burgh could reply, her husband entered, in company with Wordley Glynn.

Any one but Wordley would have evinced surprise at such an unexpected meeting with Ernest, under the circum-

stances in which they stood ; but surprise, as felt by others, was an emotion wholly unknown to that Master of Arts. It was for Mr. De Burgh to look surprised, as well as vexed, while Wordley, after paying his devoirs, made a courtly inclination to Ernest, though there was an expression of mingled pity and pain on his benevolent face, as much as to say—" I am sorry for you from my soul, but your conduct has been so bad, your course of life so shameful, that I must, for decency's sake, keep you at a distance."

Ernest had but waited for his appearance to depart.

" We shall see you again soon, I hope," said Mrs. De Burgh, as he bade her adieu. And she added in a lower tone, " Remember my advice about your uncle."

" I am only too grateful to you to

neglect it," replied Ernest. And he took his leave.

"Unfortunate!" exclaimed Wordley, shaking his head, as the door closed upon him. "What will become of him?"

"If you mean your cousin, sir," said Mrs. De Burgh, with a dignified air, "he appears to be making his way in the world, though, having neither fortune nor friends, his progress is necessarily slow."

"Ah! my dear madam, I don't allude to that," replied Wordley. "His progress, his advancement, is a matter of no moment, for that might be easily remedied. No, no! but the subject is too painful to speak of." And he passed his hand over his forehead, as if to wipe it away, leaving Mr. De Burgh quite impressed by the depth, intensity, and magnanimity of his extraordinary feelings.

CHAPTER IX.

A NIGHT WALK.

THAT evening Ernest found at his club a note from Mrs. De Burgh, stating that she had ascertained, from what had passed between Wordley and her husband, that his uncle was coming to town for the purpose of placing himself under an eminent physician, and that a ready-furnished house had been taken for him at Paddington, the address of which she enclosed, and where he was expected to arrive next day. She concluded by again urging

him to lose no time in seeking a reconciliation.

The more Ernest thought of this step, the more he was persuaded of its propriety and expediency. In the first place he reflected, with some feeling of self-reproach, that it was undoubtedly due to his uncle, on the grounds mentioned by Mrs. De Burgh ; in the next, it was due to his own character and interests. His chief aim was to establish his innocence—to clear himself of an opprobrious and unjust aspersion ; but he could not but see, if he succeeded in this, that the result would be a material improvement in his position and prospects. Not that he had any idea of relinquishing his independence, which, through good fortune and evil, he had struggled so hard to maintain ; but, could he regain Mr. Glynn's good opinion, he might represent to him the cruel injustice of Wordley's

addresses to Emily, for it was evident, he loved to think, that they were as distasteful to her as they were hateful to himself. This, indeed, now suggested to his mind considerations and fears, which took precedence of all others. He was but too conscious that he loved Emily—that she had wormed herself into his heart, by her gentleness and docility, with an effect which, in the bitterness of his first disappointment, he could never have believed possible. Nor was his passion less fervent and devoted because it was less headstrong. The same enthusiasm might not be there; but there was the same strength of purpose; the same deep, earnest, vigorous feelings; the same constancy and fidelity. Emily was to him as the gentle rain after summer—the dew of morning after the withering heat of day. He felt that, if she, too, were taken from him—if she

were given to another—then, indeed, his peace would be irrevocably and for ever gone.

As he did not know but measures might be taken to deny him access to Mr. Glynn, if his proposed visit should become known to Wordley, he thought it better to make it at a time when his cousin was likely to be out; and, accordingly, he did not present himself at his uncle's new abode till the evening. It was an old detached house, surrounded by a garden, and, though large and commodious, not such a residence as one would have thought suitable to a person of Mr. Glynn's fortune; but this, if it occurred to him at all, excited no surprise in Ernest, as he considered it in keeping with his uncle's simple and unostentatious character. A strange servant opened the door; and, stating that he wished to see Mr. Glynn

on important business, but declining to give his name, Ernest was, after a moment's hesitation, admitted.

In the four or five years that had elapsed since he left Glynnellan, his appearance had materially altered, and no less materially improved. Still Mr. Glynn, looking up as he entered, recognised him instantly.

“ You !” he exclaimed, starting from his seat, as if all his infirmity had vanished ; “ is it possible you can show your face here ?”

“ I have come,” began Ernest, restraining his feelings, “ to—”

“ Stay,” interrupted Mr. Glynn. “ You want money. Name the sum, and you shall have it: only rid me of your presence.”

“ I want no money, sir,” answered Ernest. “ The time has been when I

have wanted it—when I have wanted bread ; but I made no application to you.”

“ No, you take money from me without application,” said Mr. Glynn, with bitter emphasis.

“ It may be idle to say I don’t understand your meaning,” replied Ernest ; “ for though such is the fact, I have not come here to cavil or to recriminate. Far from it. Yet something you must permit me to say, in my own justification. Some years have passed, sir, since you discarded me ; and, entering the world as I did, my struggle upward has necessarily been a hard one. But upward I have struggled—unfriended and unaided. I have obtained the position of a gentleman : and I maintain it by my own industry and exertions. Is it likely, then, I should come to you now for pecuniary assistance, when I shrank from such a step in my worst adversity ?”

“All this is mere words!” cried Mr. Glynn. “What do you want?”

“I want to clear myself of an unjust aspersion—to show I am a wronged and innocent man.”

“Oh, yes! you will say anything.”

“I will say what is true, sir; and having said it, shall feel I have done all that honour requires, and am not accountable for the future.”

“Honour!—honour!” said Mr. Glynn, contemptuously. “What is such a word to you?”

“It would be nothing indeed if I had committed the crime you suppose,” replied Ernest, his voice trembling with suppressed resentment; “but, sir, I tell you now, what I told you once before—solemnly declare to you, by everything I hold dear and sacred, that you have condemned me wrongfully, and that my

acquaintance with Jessie Clinton was characterised by nothing discreditable either to her or to myself—but, as I believe, the reverse.”

“As *you* believe!” said Mr. Glynn, scoffingly. “I told you, you would say anything. But you are mistaken, man, if you suppose this is all honour requires. It requires at least restitution—restitution of the money you robbed me of, on the night you absconded from Glynnellan.”

“You accuse me of this!” cried Ernest, in a terrible voice.

But the strong and indignant emotions which he had restrained with so much difficulty, were now beyond his control: he felt that he was no longer master of his actions; and without casting one look at his uncle, he rushed from the house.

Mr. Glynn himself was hardly less excited. For some time he paced the

room with quick and agitated steps, muttering incoherent exclamations, and occasionally striking his hand before him in a frantic manner. But gradually his demeanour became calmer and more rational, and though the traces of anger remained, his face assumed an uneasy look, suggestive of perplexity and doubt.

He threw himself into a chair, and tried, by recurring to other thoughts, to drive the subject from his mind. But in vain: it was too fresh, and too deeply-rooted; and, through all his restless reflections, the one distracting theme still pursued him.

In spite of his prejudices—in spite of his false and misguiding impressions, he was touched by Ernest's visit, by his appearance, even by his words. There was an air of truthfulness about them that, turn them as he would, stamped

them vividly on his mind, almost enforcing conviction. But it is the hard lot of age to have reaped a bitter experience of duplicity, and the nearer we approach to the grave, the darker and more corrupt seems the life behind us. Yet Mr. Glynn, though he clung to what he considered the damning facts, could not wholly stifle the compunctious visitings of nature. Doubts would arise, and they pleaded with an eloquent voice for mercy, or, at least, for further investigation. The old man shut his ear, his heart, against them; and as he could not shake them off, suddenly started up, and resolved to go out.

Summoning his valet, he directed him to bring his hat and cloak.

“ Shall I order the carriage round, sir ? ” asked the astonished servant.

“ Do what I tell you,” returned his master, fiercely, “ and no more.”

The hat and cloak were quickly brought, and, dismissing the obsequious attendant, Mr. Glynn sallied forth.

The hour was yet early, and the busy thoroughfares were alive with passengers, though the great tide of traffic, which poured through all day like an arterial stream, was ebbing fast. The old man walked along as if the streets were vacant, seeing nothing of the passing throng, the flaring lamps, the gay and dazzling shops. Yet their presence, if unheeded by the eye, did oppress him, and his spirit yearned for some quiet spot, where he might feel he was unobserved. In this mood he reached Cumberland Gate: the noble park, with its dark void, scarcely relieved by the outlying cordon of lights, was the very retreat he desired, and, entering, he sought the darkest walk, as if to hide himself in its gloom.

Now the fever of his brow was subdued; he breathed more freely, and felt soothed by the solitude and darkness. He could hear the city's hum, but only to proclaim it at a distance; he could see the lights, gleaming, like the fires of a hostile camp, round the boundaries of the park; but they showed that he was away from the haunts of men, and alone.

Not alone! It was not that he was followed, as he traversed the secluded path, by a ferocious-looking vagrant, who dogged his steps, till, in the darkest spot, he found that he was himself an object of surveillance, vigilantly pursued by a stealthy shadow, which could only represent a detective policeman—but, coming out by the Serpentine, the old man was accosted by a woman, who had been loitering some time on the bank, occasionally

stopping to gaze in the black and fatal stream. At first he thought she was one of the Rahabs of the place, two or three of whom had tendered their company in his way across the park; but, as he was passing on without reply, the exclamation of despair with which she turned away arrested him, and he called her back.

“Do you ask charity?” he said; “a miserable alms, to go and spend in drink!”

“Ah, no, sir!” was the reply. “I am perishing. Yet it is not that. Worse is before me if I return to my husband penniless.”

“I know you’re an impostor,” returned Mr. Glynn; “but here is money for you.” And he put some silver in her hand. “Now begone.”

“Oh, thank you! thank you!” cried the woman, “and bless you, sir. I was just thinking it would be easy to die here,

if it were permitted ; but now I see it would be a deadly, horrible sin. I will go—I am going. But I seem to know you, sir—yes, it must be ! You are Squire Glynn, I'm sure."

The old man, who was turning impatiently away, looked round again. " Well, if I am !" he said.

" You are, then ?" cried the woman, eagerly. " Oh ! sir, can you tell me where Mr. Ernest is ? He would befriend me if he knew where I was, I'm certain he would."

" What claim have you on Ernest Glynn ?"

" No claim ; but that is nothing. I am in misery ; and if he is able, he will assist me."

" You have found him generous, then !" said the old man, tauntingly.

" Generous indeed," replied the woman,

unconscious of his meaning. "I owe him more than I could make you understand; and if I had listened to his counsel, I should never have come to what I have."

"And are you the girl he led astray at Glynnellan?"

"Led astray! Who has said that?"

"Everybody; it was in every mouth."

"Let who will say it, it is false—totally, utterly false. Was it leading astray to reclaim me from a debasing superstition, after he had saved me from a violent and cruel death? This is what Ernest Glynn did for me, sir—more: yes! more than I can find words or courage to tell. And can any—"

"Stop, woman!" cried Mr. Glynn, fastening his hand on her wrist, in a paroxysm of vehemence, "Seek not to cloke his guilt, and your own shame, by

these unblushing assertions. The time is past when they could affect his welfare. I have cast him off."

"Is it possible?"

"It is true!"

"And still the world exists!" said Jessie, raising her eyes to Heaven.

"Wrong, cruelty, avarice, oppression, go on and on; the virtuous suffer, the noble and chivalrous are crushed, the poor are trampled under foot; and yet the Lord seeth. Where will it all end?" She drew forth the money he had given her.

"Here, sir, take this back. I have told you I am perishing; but, forlorn as I am, I will accept no aid from one who has injured Ernest Glynn."

"Then, throw it away," said Mr. Glynn, though less excitedly. "You swear he has behaved to you as you describe?"

“ Most solemnly I swear it.”

“ Well, come to me to-morrow at this time, to my house,” rejoined Mr. Glynn. “ Here is my address.”—He thrust a card into her hand, and, muttering some incoherent remark, walked away, leaving her still on the bank.

There was increased moodiness in his manner as he proceeded; and, occupied by his own thoughts, he took a different direction from what he intended, wandering into Piccadilly, till he came nearly to Queensbury House. There, as he was turning back, a man crossed from the other side of the way, and knocked at a mansion directly in front of him. It was his nephew Wordley.

“ Can you tell me who resides in that house?” asked Mr. Glynn of a policeman, who was just passing.

“ That ’ere, sir?” replied he. “ It’s a

rummy ken, though we haven't been able to nab 'em yet. It's what they call a hell."

"Oh !" said Mr. Glynn. And, after looking at the house for a moment, he retraced his steps homewards.

CHAPTER X.

WORLDLY AFFAIRS.

THE fact of Ernest being a visitor at Mr. De Burgh's, and, as was very manifest, in high favour with his lady, if not with Emily, stimulated Wordley to lose no time, now he had secured Mr. De Burgh's sanction, in making his proposal to Emily herself; and this he resolved to do on the following day, leaving her in the interim to the tuition of her father.

He had many reasons for pushing forward his suit as rapidly as possible; and

the reappearance of Ernest, at so important and critical a juncture, gave them a new significance. Severe losses at play and on the turf, the latter undertaken in a vain hope of retrieving himself, and so covering serious defalcations in the money he received for his uncle, but which only led him into fresh difficulties, had now brought his affairs to such a pass, that exposure, and consequently ruin, seemed inevitable. But marriage with the heiress of a millionaire opened a channel of escape from every embarrassment; while the mere rumour of it, to which he should take care to give the utmost publicity, would stave off impatient creditors, and give him time to re-establish his fortunes.

With such alluring dreams does the bankrupt trader often beguile his imagination, at the very moment that the fatal docket is being struck against his name.

Wordley was turning these things in his mind as he sipped his coffee at breakfast, when the door was thrown open, and a servant announced Captain Blackman.

The Captain, who had formerly been a bold dragoon, and had figured in that character at numberless trotting-matches, was a military-looking man, with a strongly-marked, but not unpleasing physiognomy, adorned with moustachios of that peculiar shade of black which betrays the Tyrian dye. His hair, or what remained of it, had evidently partaken of the libation, and a few scanty locks were strained over the centre of his head, in a vain attempt to conceal its baldness.

“My dear fellow, I’m extremely glad to find you at home,” said he, at once throwing himself into a seat, “for I’ve heard something that has made me rather

uneasy. But first, allow me to have the honour of shaking hands with you.”—This was a favourite blandishment with the gallant Captain.—“’Pon my word you’ve a nice crib here. But you’re at your chocolate, I see. I can never resist chocolate. For half a farthing, I’d take a cup with you.”

“I’m really concerned I can’t tempt you,” replied the polite Wordley, who, though retaining all his smiles, was much nettled at the Captain’s visit; “but it’s coffee.”

“The very thing,” cried the Captain. “If there’s one beverage I love more than another—for I love them all, and am always thirsty—it’s the juice of the grateful berry. I’ve drunk it in the East and in the West with the same pleasure and relish. By all means give me a cup.”

“And what is your news?” said Wordley,

carelessly, while the Captain, on receiving his coffee, helped himself to an egg and some ham.

“I’ll tell you,” rejoined his visitor. “But, ’pon honour, you’ll think I’m making a second breakfast. It must be the country air that’s made me so peckish. You’re quite the country here. I saw a field just below, and I don’t know when I’ve seen one before. I thought Paddington was a slow place, but, by George, it puts a new edge on your grinders. Thank you, I *will* take another cup—it’s so delicious. I’ll cut the ham myself, thank you. ’Pon my word, it’s first-rate. Where on earth do you get your hams?”

“I’ve not the least idea,” said Wordley.

“All right,” rejoined the Captain, putting his finger on his nose. “Sheridan’s story—nunkey pays for Bobby. And, by the way, that reminds me, my

dear fellow. You know our last bit of paper is due to-day ? ”

“ Yes, but that need give you no concern. I’ve written to Hyams to put him off.”

“ Put off honest Moses ! Ah ! if you could do that, you’d be a Prince. But you can’t—two to one you can’t.”

“ You must excuse my not betting, but you may make your mind perfectly easy that point, I assure you.”

“ And I can assure you I saw his ugly mug at the door, as I shot in, giving him the go-by in the cleanest manner ; and I shouldn’t wonder if he’s only waiting till you go out to pounce upon you.”

“ Then, I shall be able to make a satisfactory arrangement with him, no doubt. But was it in reference to this bill you favoured me with the unexpected pleasure of a visit ? ”

“ Well, not exactly—no ! By George, my dear fellow, what a splendid head of hair you’ve got.” — And the Captain involuntarily put his hand on his own bald crown.—“ But the fact is, there’s a rumour on town that you’re making up to the daughter of old De Burgh ; it’s in the papers, I believe ; but, perhaps, for all that, it isn’t true.”

“ I’m happy to say the report of my being engaged—yes, I believe I may say engaged—to Miss De Burgh of Bydvil is perfectly true.”

“ You can never be such a flat—such a —’pon my word, my dear fellow, I don’t know what term to use. Why, you’ll have a hornet’s nest about you in a twinkling, if the report’s credited. Depend upon it, this is what has brought honest Moses here this morning.”

“ I’m sure, Captain, I feel as much in-

debted for his polite attention as for yours; but I need hardly remind gentlemen of such experience in pecuniary transactions, that none of Mr. De Burgh's money will find its way into my hands till the marriage actually takes place."

"By Jove, it must never take place, unless you want to be stumped up. Don't you know old De Burgh's ruined?"

"He'll stand a good deal of ruining."

"The whole tot of his cash is risked on the 'Atlas' Indiaman, and, by George, there's news this morning that the stern of a boat has been picked up, with 'Atlas' painted on it, and, hang me! if the owners haven't come on old De Burgh for the insurance. So you'll see what chance you have of tin in that quarter. A nod's as good as a wink."

"If we all possessed your sagacity, my dear Captain. But really it's most

obliging of you to take such an interest in my affairs.”—And Wordley spoke with a smile so benignant that it quite veiled the sarcasm.

“My dear fellow, I take the deepest interest in you,” replied the Captain. “*Allow me to have the honour of shaking hands with you.* Honest Moses himself doesn’t feel more interested in your welfare than I do. And this brings me to the starting-post. If you’re on the matrimonial plant, I’ll put you up to a wrinkle, and, by George, with your head of hair, you can’t help succeeding. I only wish the amiable Mrs. Blackman would have the good taste to depart, and, by Jove, I’d try my own luck in the race. What do you say to a widow as young as this girl of De Burgh’s, beautiful as an angel, and with yellowboys enough to set up a bank?”

“Can there possibly be such a being?”

“All I ask is a thousand,” returned the Captain. “You engage to give me a thousand, one day after marriage, and I’ll undertake to smooth the way.”—He pulled out his memorandum-book, and made a note of the transaction.—“There, just append your autograph to that, and, egad! it’s all settled.”

“I quite envy your way of doing business, my dear friend—your energy, promptitude, and felicity of resource,” said Wordley, with such a playful air, that it was impossible to say whether he spoke in jest or earnest. “But I must really think over this—I must indeed—the proposal is so unexpected. And as to any written engagement, you must feel it is out of the question.”

“Must depend on your promise, then. Well, I’ve a regard for you, Horatio,

and, by George, under the circumstances, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pounds."

"And now will you excuse my bidding you good morning, Captain," said the courtly host; "for I've so much to do, I hardly know which way to turn."

"'Pon honour, I don't know how to get out—and that's the truth," returned the Captain. "I had the greatest difficulty in eluding honest Moses as I came in. The fact is, I've opened his eye to a small extent, apart from our bill transactions, and, by George, I must sit him out—if he stops till next week."

"That shall not be, for having favoured me with this visit, you are here under my protection; and I'll let you out another way."

"My dear fellow, you're a trump—by Jove! Allow me to have the honour of

shaking hands with you. Here we are.”
—And he followed his host from the room.

Quickly returning, Wordley rang the bell.

“ Mr. Hyams is here, is he not ? ” he asked of the servant.

“ Yes, sir, waiting to see you, ” was the reply.

“ Bring him up. ”—And Mr. Hyams was brought up accordingly.

Honest Moses, as Hyams was familiarly termed, in reference, perhaps, to his tendencies in an opposite direction, presented more the appearance of a sheriff’s officer than a Rothschild. Such, indeed, was his ostensible calling, and, in that capacity, he also kept a sponging-house, where he afforded every domestic accommodation to gentlemen in difficulties, as he was always ready to do, in a pecuniary way, to gen-

tlemen at large. What made his benevolence more touching was the fact, as stated by himself, that these advances were invariably effected at a great personal sacrifice, insomuch that, to make up the sum required, he was compelled to throw in investments of no possible use to the borrower, though, as he alleged, they would ultimately have been very profitable to himself, if he could have kept them in his own hands.

“Mornin’, sir,” he said to Wordley. “I thought the Captains was here, sir.”—And he gave a leer, at which any Captain might have quaked.

“Captain Blackman has gone, Mr. Hyams,” replied the bland host. “He went off down the other stairs.”

“Well, what a strange mans the Captains is!” exclaimed Moses, turning up his eyes. “Why, it’s only yesterdays he

askies me to let him have the honour to shake hands with him, and now he gives me the slant—reg'lar. What a strange mans! But I've come to you about the little bill, Mr. Glynnns. The partys who's got it won't let it stand over, sir."

"And who is this inexorable party?"

"Well, I mustn't tell the partys' name, Mr. Glynnns," replied Honest Moses, who had never let the bill out of his own possession: "but I wanted moneys, sir, and was obliged to put the little bill in cirkelations, sir; and the bill would have been protested, Mr. Glynnns, only I went to the partys, and on my oaths to get him the moneys, he's let me bring it away. But there'll be a black marks against it to-night, sir, if it isn't took up."

"This is hard treatment, Mr. Hyams, after my large dealings with you."

"I can't help it, sir, now the bill is in

cirkelations. I tried to ease down the partys a bit, but it was no goes. I think he wants the moneys. And there's them other three little bills coming on, Mr. Glynnns. If you can't meet this one, what'll you do with them?—speshly now you're goin to be married!”

“Married! what put that in your head? Is it possible a man of your discernment, Mr. Hyams, can believe the silly report now on the town?”

“Aint it true, then? Well, I nevers!”

“It's a pure fabrication, I assure you. But, about the bill—to be short with you, I'll take up the one due to-day, but you must do me another.”

“I'm always glad to oblige, Mr. Glynnns, if I can, and as you aint goin' to be married; but the moneys is very close now, sir. But how mush?”

“Five hundred.”

“Lor, Mr. Glynnns! I couldn’t, sir.”

“You must. I want the money particularly.”

“Well, I’ll tell you what I’ll do—jist to oblige, I’ll give you three hundred and fifty in moneys, and a hundred in wines and pictures—the pictures is worth the moneys. I’m lettin ’em go for nothin, jist to make up the sums.”

“Ah, Mr. Hyams! Mr. Hyams! if I had but half your brains—your genius, my good sir!” cried the courtly Wordley. “But positively I don’t like this arrangement; the wine and pictures, though I should be sorry to underrate them, are positively useless to me.”

“Then I’m very sorry I can’t let you have the moneys, Mr. Glynnns.”

“Oh, I don’t decline the terms. If the arrangement is absolutely necessary—that is, will be a convenience to you—we will

conclude it at once. I will call at your office to-morrow, at this time, and bring the bill with me."

"But the other little bill, Mr. Glynns? You must take that up now, sir, if you please."

"Very well: it's only two hundred, I believe. Just wait a minute."—And he left the room.

He was absent so long that Honest Moses, who was rather of an inquisitive disposition, had time to make an inspection of the various papers in his desk, finding less to gratify his curiosity than he had expected. As Wordley, on coming back, turned the handle of the door to enter, he quietly reseated himself, and fixed an abstracted gaze on the ceiling.

"Lor, Mr. Glynns, how you startles me, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Dear me! how concerned I am!" replied

Wordley. "I'd no idea you were so nervous, Mr. Hyams. But I hope this draft,"—and the usual benignant smile curled his lip—"will act as a restorative. And now I must trouble you for the bill."

The transfer was made, and as Wordley ran his eye over the bill, the Jew, with a quick imperceptible motion, raised the cheque to the light. Then a peculiar expression came over his face, and he folded it carefully up, and put it in his pocket-book.

"I shall see you to-morrows then, Mr. Glynnns!" he said. "Mornin', sir."

"I've the pleasure of wishing you a very good morning, Mr. Hyams. Adieu, my good sir."

And they parted. The Jew, however, on his way down stairs, again drew the cheque from his pocket, and scrutinised it severely; but, as he heard steps approaching, hastily

put it up, muttering—"This is the second, but if the peoples pays it, it's nuffin to me."

Wordley's levee was not yet over, and he now learnt that a strange rough-looking man was waiting below, who declared that he would not go away till he saw him. After a moment's hesitation, supposing that it was some importunate dun, whom a few civil words might conciliate, Wordley directed him to be admitted.

If anything could have betrayed him into an ebullition of surprise, it would have been the apparition which then presented itself. Wrapped in a shabby overcoat of drugget, which had once belonged to the cad of an omnibus, and now served to cover a heap of rags and dirt—with his face begrimed and unshaven, and his red locks falling in rank luxuriance from beneath his battered hat, the new-comer was yet so familiar to the memory of

Wordley, that he instantly recognised Frost.

“Hilloa, Squire ! you’ll know me again, won’t you—you stares so !” cried the visitor. “Here I am back to you, you see. So fond of you I can’t stop away. And how’s Squire Wordley ? I aint forgot your name, have I ?”

“Thank-you, thank-you, Mr. Frost,” was the complaisant reply : “I feel sincere pleasure in reciprocating your sentiments, which do you honour. I hope you are going on well in the world ?”

“Oh ! yes, first rate, Squire,” returned Frost, with a grin, as he looked down at his eloquent habiliments. “The worst of it is, I’m rather short of fluice, being all goins out and no comins in, and my uncle—for I’ve got an uncle as well as you, only he ain’t such a good ’un—won’t fork up without a pledge, which isn’t always

quite handy. So, seeing you about town, I thought I'd just come to you, and ask you to lend me a trifle."—And Frost concluded with a chuckle.

"It was exceedingly considerate of you to give me the preference," replied Wordley, "and I feel flattered by it, although it entails on me the pain of refusing you—not, believe me, from any indifference to your necessities, but just at this moment I have so many more direct calls upon me, that I am obliged to be very economical."

"What, while you're gettin' such a power of tin every night! No, no, Squire. You've only been in town, as I've heard, about three days, and I've seen you myself goin' to the queer shop in Piccadilly constant, all the time. You wouldn't go there so often, if you wasn't makin' it answer. I know you better than that. But that aint all."

“ My good friend.”—

“ It’s no use you’re tryin’ to blind me. You did so once before, but you won’t do it again. Once bit, twice shy. Either we comes to a clear understandin’, or I make a clean breast of it to your uncle.”

“ I should have thought your experience in that way was not very encouraging, Mr. Frost.”

“ Perhaps it isn’t,” said Frost, with a scowl, which transformed his whole face. “ But, I’ll tell you what, Squire—times are altered. The girl we brought against Master Ernest is now my wife ; and I know where to lay my hands on him, too. Say the word, and we’ll all come before your uncle together, and tell a different story from before, I know.”

“ And you must know also I care nothing for these threats,” said Wordley, though really alarmed at the prospect of

such a combination—"which I am surprised any one with your good sense, and honest manly feelings, should condescend to use. But I gather from this very fact you are in more distress than I imagined, and as I am sincerely desirous to serve you, I shall not allow what you have said to prevent my having the pleasure of ministering to your necessities. Pray accept this little assistance."—And he handed him a bank note.

"Humph!" said Frost. "Well, it 'ull do for the present. I'll come and see you again, Squire, when I've spent this."

He turned to the door, but, as he was going out, he was confronted by Mr. Glynn.

There was a quiet decision in the old man's face, as he entered the room, so different from his usual fretful and irascible manner, that Wordley, though preserving

an outward calm, felt an instinctive presentiment of mischief. Perhaps, the same idea suggested itself to Frost; for he slunk off without a word.

“So, this is the sort of associate—I should rather say accomplice—with whom you ally yourself,” exclaimed Mr. Glynn, bending his keen eyes on Wordley with a lightning glance. “Don’t dare, sir, to speak to me. Enough, I know your devices—I know your haunts. This instant you leave my house, never to enter it again.”

“My dear uncle—”

“Will you go?” thundered Mr. Glynn. “My present intention is to give you enough to live upon, but say only a word more, and I send you forth a beggar. If you are still here, in one hour from this moment, I will have you ejected by force.”

But before the appointed time, Word-

ley, dreading the threatened consequences, had left the house, taking with him all his personal chattels. Nor did the revolution in the establishment end here. Within another hour all the servants, from the squire's valet downwards, were discharged, and Mr. Glynn remained the only inmate of the house, with the exception of an old charwoman, engaged to attend upon him, and with whom he shut himself up in misanthropic solitude.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

FROM the privacy in which Mr. Glynn lived, Wordley felt assured that, for some time at least, the fact of a rupture having occurred between them was not likely to transpire, and therefore, if he could only avert impending embarrassments, that he might still possess unimpaired all the advantages essentially dependent on the connexion. These, he believed, would be particularly serviceable in forming a matrimonial engagement, of which he now began to think very

seriously, as the most eligible speculation in view, at the same time keeping carefully aloof from the De Burghs, not only as if he had never made any proposal for Emily, but as if he were actually unconscious of her existence.

He was not the only acquaintance whose cautious steps now avoided the great house in —— Square; but though the worshippers of the golden image which De Burgh, the millionaire, had set up, no longer hearing the tinkling brass which to them is far sweeter music than harp or dulcimer, adroitly shunned the desecrated spot, Mr. De Burgh was astonished to find that the distinguished characters attracted by intellect—the great notabilities of literature and science—still thronged the saloons of his wife. Their presence gave the proud man dignity, as well as courage; and though

Mrs. De Burgh urged him to prepare for the worst, by at once retiring to a humbler establishment, he resolved to hold out to the last, and maintain his ground till ruin was complete.

For some days he was unable to account for the non-appearance of Wordley, but, at length, the unwelcome truth began to dawn upon his mind, and his rage became uncontrollable. Still he could hardly persuade himself, on reflection, that such an affront had been offered to him, and impatiently awaited an opportunity of placing the fact beyond doubt.

That opportunity soon arrived. A grand ball at Lord Brookville's, the father of the Honourable Vincent Crane, was destined to include in the list of guests more than one character of this history, and, among others, Ernest, through the interposition of Mrs. De Burgh, received

an invitation, and determined to be present.

Lord Brookville, like his son, had a genuine taste for the arts, and, on the eventful night, his noble reception rooms were adorned with many superb works, both from the easel and the chisel. Statues of purest marble, cut with the delicacy of life, and seeming to swell with life's instinct and freedom, bathed in the dazzling effulgence of numberless chandeliers, while stately mirrors, reflecting the scene, appeared to open new saloons in every direction. But the radiant lights, the gorgeous apartments, the magnificent conservatory — statues, pictures, flowers—were as nothing to the company: to the be vies of youthful and courtly beauties who thronged the ball-room, arrayed in all the perfection of nature, combined with all the aids of art. And to this grand spectacle bands of

music, and the wavy figures of the dance, adding the charms of motion and sound to form and object and colour, gave an animation and vitality absolutely thrilling.

Though Mr. De Burgh was strongly in favour of a display, expressly to throw dust in the malicious eyes of the world, his wife, overruling the proposition, dressed for the occasion with her usual precise simplicity ; and the costume of Emily was as becoming as it was exquisite. Never, indeed, had the young girl looked so lovely ; and the thought that, in all probability, she should there meet one who would instantly single out her, among the whole assembly, as his first partner—a thought that banished the gloomy apprehensions and misgivings of the previous week, gave a glow to her cheek, a buoyancy to her spirits, an elasticity and life to her steps, that pierced not

a few fair bosoms in the throng with the poisoned barb of envy.

More than once Mr. De Burgh heard, or fancied he heard, some half-whispered reference to the precarious tenure of his fortunes, as he moved through the rooms, and it was only too clear that many of his great acquaintances, who had basked in the sunshine of his opulence, met him with the briefest possible greeting ; but the consideration with which he was received by the host and hostess, as well as by the Honourable Vincent, soothed his wounded pride, and he looked up with exultation when a distinguished circle gathered round his wife, attracted alike by the talisman of her attainments, and the grateful recollection of her friendship and hospitality.

A heightened joyousness in Emily's face, a brighter sparkle in her eye, a

quicker pulsation of her heart, notified to herself, though to no one else, that Ernest was near. In a moment he was at her side.

But Ernest, though he addressed her with his usual kindly smile, appeared anything but happy. All his vivacity was gone; and expecting every moment to see Wordley present himself, and claim Emily's hand, he looked on the brilliant scene around as a mockery of his despair.

Thus our lightest, as well as brightest hopes, are dashed violently to the ground at the moment we anticipate their fulfilment, and now Emily felt but too keenly the instability of human pleasure. The dance commenced, and they still stood silent together.

“Are you not going to dance?” asked Ernest, at length.

“ Not this time,” replied Emily.

“ I imagined you were engaged.”

“ Oh, no !”

“ What a dolt I am !” thought Ernest. And he instantly secured her hand for the next quadrille.

Wordley, whose appearance he so dreaded, was indeed present, though in another part of the room. In moving forward he was joined by Captain Blackman.

“ There’s the widow, my dear fellow,” said the gallant warrior. “ Now go at her at once ; and, by George, with your manners, and such a head of hair as you’ve got, you’ll have her down in a twinkling.”

Wordley followed his friend’s eye with his usual careless glance, but for once it kindled with awakened interest as it rested on the person indicated—a young and lovely girl, whose beauty was indeed tem-

pered by a certain indescribable gravity, but who, neither in her dress nor years, presented any trace of the touching sorrow of widowhood.

“Isn’t she a clipper?” pursued the Captain. “By Jove, if the amiable Mrs. Blackman—but she won’t; she’s too great a sticker. However, you’ll remember it’s a thousand.”

“For merely showing me a pretty woman, my dear Captain?”

“No, but for getting her for you. Just ask Crane to introduce you, and I’ll set to work on her father. I’ve got a wrinkle out of him already, and, egad! I’ll pump you into him, my dear fellow, at such a rate, that he shall talk of no one else for a month. Then I’ll be at the daughter; and I’ll lay it on as thick about you as if you were my brother, and we both belonged to the talented family. But sharp’s

the word. If you're not alive, there'll be a dozen before you."

"You are arranging a most pleasant little excitement for me, my dear Captain; but I've regarded you for a long time as one of my most valued friends, and I feel a sincere pleasure in acting under your advice. But there's Crane; I'll go and speak to him."

"And I'm down on the old fellow instant."

Yet he lingered till the Honourable Vincent, who was eager to oblige every one, presented Wordley; and it did not escape his observation that the lady's colour changed, and she gave something like a start, as her ear caught the name of Glynn.

"By Jove, these widows are like tinder," he muttered; "one spark, and they're all in a flame. What a chance for

me, if the amiable had only departed! but, by George, she's got the longevity of Widdicombe. But here goes at the governor!"

"Captain Blackman, how do you do?" said Miss Letitia Starchley, arresting him. "Have you heard of Bacon's—"

"Essays?" cried the Captain. "Oh, yes! but can't say I ever read 'em. Too slow."

"You stupid Captain!" said Tish, coquettishly; "I was not referring to the great philosopher, but to my brother Bacon, the philosopher that is to be. I was going to ask you if you had heard of his—"

"Getting the scholarship? Oh, yes."

"No, of—"

"Going in for honours?" cried the Captain. "Twenty-three times."

"Then every one's talking of it, I sup-

pose. But that is not it. Do you know he's passed his little go?"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the man of war, making his escape.

"Mr. Parkyns, have you heard the news?" asked the undaunted Letitia.

"Do you mean as to the authorship of the slashing article on Bruggins, in the 'Literary Sewer?'" rejoined Parkyns.

"No, but about Bacon. He's passed his little go."

"The force of Bacon can no *further* go," muttered the Honourable Vincent to the critic, as he was passing.

Wordley, meanwhile, had, as already intimated, met an unexpectedly gracious reception from the young and beautiful widow.

"Your name sounds very familiar to me," she observed, after a few common-places. "Is it not of Welsh origin?"

“ Yes. Our family has been seated in Wales, according to the pedigree, from the time of King Arthur. We claim to be descended from Sir Caradoc, who was one of the knights of the Round Table.”

“ And the favourite of Queen Gwenover, I think?”

“ Ah! you know the story, then? It’s rather an interesting episode of family history.”

“ I should call it family romance.”

“ That is too severe for you. I should have imagined you were all faith and trustfulness.”

“ Of course. I even believe in the pedigree with the famous marginal note — ‘ About this time the flood happened.’ ”

“ A flood of sunshine, then, if it was about this time,” said Wordley, gallantly. But the lady, though she appeared pleased, did not recognise the compliment.

“Have you clans in Wales, as they have in Scotland?” she asked.

“No. That institution is peculiar to the Scotch.”

“Then, there are not a whole host of people with the same name—say, for instance, of the Glynns—settled in particular spots?”

“Yes, there are; but in our part of Wales I know of no Glynns but ourselves—that is, my uncle and myself.”

A shade came over the beautiful face of the lady as he uttered these words—so different from its previous expression, that, at another time, it could not have escaped his notice; but the music, after a momentary pause, again striking up, his attention was diverted to the quadrille. At the same time, he devoted himself so assiduously to his partner, that he did not observe, on taking his place, that

they had for their *vis-à-vis* Ernest and Emily.

The two lovers—for such Ernest and Emily were in fact, though not in word—were equally unobservant, and, in all that brilliant company, saw no one but each other. For a time they forgot their previous misgivings; and, as they joined their hands, the inspiring strain of the band, and the sweeter melody of their own individual sympathies, combined, with the scene, the situation, and the moment, to exalt and spiritualize their happiness. It was not till they were crossing in the dance that they discerned Wordley; and Ernest could not repress an exclamation as, glancing at his partner, he recognised in the young and beautiful widow the once adored Clara Meredith.

Clara, too, uttered an exclamation, but it was as much of joy as surprise, though

her cheek paled, her step trembled, her fine eyes flashed fire, as Ernest, unheeding her half-extended hand, passed her with a low inclination.

The two girls—for though one had been a wife, they were of the same age, and but just opening womanhood—instinctively fixed their gaze on each other, with an interest and emotion different in tone, but strangely similar in character and degree.

These effects were not overlooked by one who eagerly watched the progress of Wordley. The stake of a thousand pounds, which he conceived himself to hold in the issue, had greatly quickened the optical perceptions of Captain Blackman, and he had posted himself on a good spot for observation, while he took care, at the same time, to carry out his design of commending Wordley to the Judge.

“Did you notice my friend Glynn, sir, particularly?” he asked, as they were left alone.

“Yes, I did,” replied the Judge, “I was struck by his name, which reminded me of some one I once knew in America.”

“And did you observe what a remarkable head of hair he’s got?” returned the Captain. “That hair owes nothing to Rowland, I assure you. Its rich luxuriance is entirely natural, and the result of a cranial fruitfulness. By George, sir, there’s no mistake about that hair! It covers the head-piece of a genius.”

“You think Mr. Glynn a clever man?” rejoined the Judge, as if rather puzzled by the Captain’s rhapsody.

“Clever! By Jove, sir, he’s one of the most extraordinary men in this country.”

“Is he in Congress—Parliament, I mean?”

“Oh !” thought the Captain, “you’re looking after the grapes, are you ?”—And he said aloud—“In a few weeks he’ll be in for his county, sir, which in fact, all belongs to his uncle. Talk of the *Prince* of Wales—i’faith, I’ve every respect for His Royal Highness—but Glynn’s uncle is *King* of Wales ; and, as to his cash—by George ! if we went by that, his name ought to be Nugget. But in addition to this, before six months have passed—yes, I’ll only ask six months—you’ll see Glynn in one of the best berths under the Crown.”

“A placeman !” said the Republican, knitting his brows.

“Yes, sir,” answered the Captain, not observing his dissent, and going further and further into the mire ; “and he’ll have more than one place, too, and a brace of nice snug sinecures besides, I assure you ;

and, by George, sir, if he marries, and can catch hold of any relations—say, for instance, his wife's father, he'll pop him into a settlement, and every one of his wife's kindred will be handsomely provided for at the public expense."

" Ah ! "

" 'Pon honour, yes, sir ! I know his sentiments. Now let us suppose his father-in-law was a fine, portly, venerable-looking old fellow like yourself—egad, sir ! he'd have you knighted."

" Me knighted ! " said the indignant Republican.

" No mistake about it. He'd get you a title, sir."

" But I'm an American citizen."

" No matter for that. If you were a Kamschatka citizen, it would be all the same, when Glynn's interest is brought to work. By Jove, sir, if that were all, there

are ways and means of turning you into an Englishman, and I'll undertake to prove at Herald's College that you *are* an Englishman, or, at least, that your father was."

"Sir!" exclaimed the Judge, with kindling wrath, "I tell you again I'm an American."

"And I tell you again, if you were fifty times an American, it's not the least consequence," returned the Captain. "I'll engage — But, wheu! what's the matter now? One moment!"

And he hurried up to Wordley, who was just leading Clara, more agitated than she was willing should appear, to a seat.

She had danced out the quadrille, repressing the bitter sense of wounded love and pride, and, perhaps, of self-reproach, which Ernest's demeanour had awakened. In the first rush of her feelings she had

tried to show indifference to his averted eye and cold upbraiding look, and even affected to be in high spirits, chatting to Wordley with constrained vivacity. But this, if it blinded others, could not delude herself, and was too great an effort to be sustained. The little glimmer of defiance had quite burnt out by the time she rejoined her father, and her only wish was to be gone.

What a relief to escape from the lordly saloon, with its garish lights, its flashing mirrors, its stately company; and throw herself back, heart-stricken as she was, in the darkest corner of the carriage, where she might brood unobserved. But it was not till she reached her own chamber—not till she saw in the faithful glass the spectral image of herself—that she bowed her head on her hands, and wept.

Was this the heroine? Was this the

stern girl who, more than emulating the reckless daughter of Sparta, sacrificed her lover at the shrine, not of country, but of political feeling? Alas! long ago she had awakened from her miserable delusion! Her heart, which she had thought adamant, was only as wax, melting at the first genial gleam of sympathy: she could not turn the milk of human kindness, perpetually welling in her bosom, into gall; she could not change the warm blood in her veins into stone. Heroine! no! every thought, every feeling, every wish and hope and fear, speaking with one mocking and accusing voice, told her she was only a woman.

The wife of a month, to be for ever a widow—in the fulness of her beauty and promise, in the first glow of her youth, on the very threshold of life—cast down, smitten, and crushed by her own wilful,

suicidal hand. The wreath was torn from her hair; her priceless gems were scattered on the floor; the whole world now could give her nothing but a grave.

Yes! there was yet one slender hope—one. It was the straw of the drowning man, but she clutched it. And the more she mused upon it, the more practicable and more available did it seem. To how many of us, in such moments, does the straw take the dimensions of a cable!

CHAPTER XII.

PLAYING WITH EDGED TOOLS.

ALTHOUGH philosophy and experience alike attest that the final universal distribution of rewards and punishments is the prerogative of Futurity, inasmuch as they are administered without discrimination by the Present, it does, nevertheless, sometimes occur, in cases by no means rare, that we obtain our deserts, whether for good or evil, even in this transitory sphere. The man who, from a peculiar condition of fortune, has been all his life struggling with adversity, without help,

without encouragement, without results—in silence, in solitude, in sorrow—suddenly finds the light of the world's favour beaming on the windows of his dwelling, dispelling the gloom of its dark chamber, and rekindling the expiring energies of his heart. On the other hand, the miserable schemer, whose whole career has been one round of success, yet who has never achieved a single step but by base and crooked means, making his every move on the chess-board of life subservient to the one great purpose of checkmating his neighbour, suddenly finds, just as capricious Fortune seems to be pouring upon him her shower of gold, that the long summer of his prosperity is over, and that nothing lies before him but dishonour and ruin.

To such a destiny the lately all-fortunate Wordley was now fast tending ; and

it was a singular coincidence that, at every point where he sought to retrieve himself, still by the same system of scheming and trickery, he was now met by Ernest, whom he had so shamefully wronged, and who, had he always pursued an honourable and upright course, would have been his most natural, as well as most steadfast ally. Their encounter at Lady Brookville's ball had brought this fact forcibly before him ; but he did not view it as a natural measure of retribution, suggestive of compunctious and remorseful reflections, but solely as a new evidence of Ernest's vindictive malignity. In these incidents he had no desire to look from effect to cause. It was enough for him to feel, in his present reverses, that wherever he turned—whenever he grasped at a prize—the figure of Ernest thrust itself, like an avenging ghost, between him and his

object, and opposed, repelled, and defeated him.

In nothing was this more obvious than in his relations with Clara, on whom, as he fondly flattered himself, he was making the most favourable impression, when the appearance of Ernest completely frustrated his designs. However Clara sought to disguise her feelings in the few moments that followed, so close an observer was not to be deceived, and he saw but too clearly that Ernest already possessed her affections—a conclusion in which he was confirmed by her speedy retreat from the ball-room.

He was sitting in the quarters he had engaged on leaving his uncle's, ruminating on these various incidents, when he was apprised that some one wished to see him, and, from the description, at once divined his visitor to be Frost. Here was a new

source of vexation, for which he had been totally unprepared, but which, threatened as he was on every side, was still the most pressing of his embarrassments. Before, however, he could make up his mind as to how he should receive the bailiff, a hasty step was heard on the stair, and he was confronted by Captain Blackman.

- The Captain's first act was carefully to close the door.

“By Jove, you're in for it now,” he then said. “You've only one thing to do, and that's to bolt.”

“My dear Captain, what can you mean?” replied Wordley, quite unruffled. “But whatever you have to say, be assured, nothing can harass me so much as to see you discomposed. Pray now—”

“It's no use you're taking it cool,” cried the Captain, interrupting him; “for, by George, this is too ugly a business.

How you could get yourself into such a jolly scrape with a headpiece like yours, does take the shine out of me! To be in debt is excusable; egad! under certain circumstances, as in my own case, struggling with adversity, bad luck, et cetera, et cetera, it's honourable. The extent to which I've opened my snip's eye is astonishing; the fellow that makes my boots is a severe sufferer; but, by Jove, you never catch a weasel asleep. They may nab me for debt—if they can; but I'll never put myself in the power of Bow-street."

"Which is a polite intimation that I have not been so prudent," rejoined Wordley, with his fine smile.

"My dear fellow, you know my weakness—that I can't bear to touch people on the tender," returned the Captain; "but there's a maxim of mine which you have

probably heard me repeat in particular exigencies, namely, a nod's as good as a wink. Well, the cheque you gave that rascal, Honest Moses, has been stopped at the bank, and, 'pon honour, some dodger has been touching up the figure, and turning twenty into two hundred. That's rather a go, I think."

Wordley seemed to think it was.

"Now I'll tell you what," pursued the Captain; "your ticket's America."

"It's really exceedingly embarrassing," observed Wordley.

"Particularly so, egad!"

"But," resumed Wordley, "I may possibly be able, if we can gain a little time—"

"My dear fellow, I'm sorry to interrupt you," said the Captain, "but, as to time, by George, it's on the wing. I'll give you two to one you haven't got ten minutes. In a quarter of an hour you'll

have Birnam wood here, as Macbeth would say—though we familiarly call it Scotland-yard.”

“Is it so urgent? Then, what do you advise? Perhaps I’d better proceed at once to Liverpool.”

“The very place where they’d be sure to nail you. No! they’ll telegraph you on all the lines. Your only plan’s to stop in town, under a cloud. Town’s the place, my dear fellow, if you want to keep quiet. Meanwhile, I’ll look out for a ship; and, when all’s settled, we’ll go off from the coast together, for, by George, I think a sea voyage will be beneficial to my own health, considering the amount of queer paper we’ve got out. The only thing is the ready—what shall we do for that?”

“I’ve got two hundred,” said Wordley, producing some Bank-notes.

“ ’Pon honour, we must make that do, then. But now the question is, where are you to hide? Moses will leave no stone unturned to catch you, for he’s got a notion of squeezing your uncle a bit. Ah! I have it! That fellow I saw below—he’ll do!” And he moved towards the door.

“ Pardon me,” cried Wordley, arresting him. “ But how will you employ him?”

“ Let’s have him up. He’ll be able to stow you somewhere.”

“ He! he can’t be trusted.”

“ But he can be bought, my dear fellow.” And the Captain vanished from the room, presently reappearing with Frost.

“ My dear Mr. Frost, I’m extremely glad to see you,” said Wordley, as complacently as if nothing had happened. “ You’ve come at a moment when I’m

sadly in want of your advice, if not your assistance; and I have such a confidence in your regard for me, that I feel a real pleasure in applying for your good offices."

"Well, you do know how to lay it on—uncommon, Squire," said Frost, with a malicious grin, "and that's no word of a—hum. But, come, what do you want?"

"By George, yes, that's the point," observed the Captain. "Our friend, my man, is strongly recommended by the faculty to try the effect of a few days' strict seclusion on his nerves, which—you know it's true, my dear Glynn—have become so morbidly excited, that he can't endure the sight of a policeman. Egad! it's extraordinary—isn't it?—when you come to consider what a harmless body of individuals the police are. But this is imperative—he must be placed where

there's no chance of his seeing a policeman."

"I'm your man," said Frost. "But I only know of one crib, and it's rather a go-down for the Squire."

"My dear Mr. Frost, let it be what it may, I can have no hesitation in placing myself under your guidance," said Wordley.

"Aint he very polite?" asked Frost of the Captain. "But what shall we do for tog? You can't go there in this."

"By George, no!" said the Captain. "But we can arrange that as we go along in the cab. And, egad! we must fix the price now. Fifty pounds for you when he's safe on shipboard."

"That will do," replied Frost.

"You know how to do business, my man, I can see," observed the Captain. "But now make yourself scarce. Wait

at the top of the street, and you'll see us get into a cab. Follow till we stop, and then jump in; and if we don't go along then it will be a pity."

"Won't it?" grinned Frost.

And with this interrogatory he departed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

AND what was the one bright, flitting syren hope that brought back a semblance of peace to Clara's heart?—yet not peace, but sufferance! On what could she find any rational expectation of healing, with her own unaided hand, the wide breach which divided her from Ernest? Surely she could not forget how she had repelled and spurned him, when he laid the whole future of his life at her feet! Never could she efface from the too vivid mirror of memory, as it rose to her eye, the terrible

look of anguish with which he had pleaded for pity, when she banished him from her presence. It had haunted her at the nuptial altar and the marriage feast: it had wrung from her a cry of agony, when she was but newly made a bride: it had risen up, like a spectre, by the bier of her dead husband, and frowned upon her from his grave. She saw it now—now, through the darkness of night, through the blacker darkness of her remorse.

But what did it tell her?—ay, what?—that he had loved her, loved too well: And had twenty brief months, which now seemed but yesterday, so impaired her charms, that they no longer retained their influence? Was her beauty, on which his enslaved eyes had been wont to linger so fondly, so adoringly—already faded? She could not shut her ear to the assurance, now so soothing and inspiriting, that it

had never before possessed such power—never appeared to so much advantage. If ever it could claim the homage of a kindred mind—ever light up the flame of true and abiding love, it must be now!

Then, why had Ernest met her so coldly? The reason, when she came to reflect, was obvious. Ernest was the soul of honour. He naturally looked upon her as the wife of Wilmore, and, as such, she was, as it were, dead to him. BUT IT WAS WILMORE WHO WAS DEAD. She was emancipated, free! The thought sent an electric thrill through her frame—a thrill of joy, of transport, of rapture: yes! though in the midst of it, her heart, awaking from its selfishness, bitterly smote and upbraided her. But can the young stand with sorrow by the yawning grave, when love and fruition beckon them away? Can Beauty array herself, a willing mourner,

in sackcloth and ashes, when imagination fondly pictures her chosen lover at her feet?

Ernest *had* loved her, he must, he should love her still. She would go to him herself, and, as it was her lips that had raised a barrier between them, from her he should hear, now her hand was again her own, that that barrier was removed. Was this a humiliation? was it repugnant to her sense of delicacy and propriety? Let her reflect, if it appeared so, how cruelly she had wronged him, and, at the same time, remember what misery and suffering she had also brought on herself. *That* told her such a step was no degradation. It was an atonement, an expiation. He should know she was free; and the strong love which she was assured he once bore her—which he had evinced and avowed—must then assert its ascendancy.

But, as she nursed this soothing conclu-

sion, a recollection of the fair girl at Ernest's side, as he moved through the dance, came upon her with the suddenness of an apparition, making her start wildly from her pillow. Could he have been false to the vows he had so solemnly pledged to herself? Alas! those vows, solemn and fervent as they were, she had never accepted. Now she could understand the full value of what she had refused; now when she was unshackled; and he—dreadful to think, to imagine possible—might be irretrievably pledged to another.

She tried to conjure up Emily's image, and it came—a form of light and grace and loveliness; but when she sought, with the eager eye of jealousy, to recall and scrutinize each individual feature—to bring up clearer each dazzling charm, the image grew imperceptibly fainter, leaving indeed a distinct impression of beauty, but

one that baffled analysis. Yet there was ever a something beaming out from the figure, like a revelation, a warning ; and, as often as it flashed across her, she felt a bitter pang of misgiving.

But her purpose never wavered ; she would go to him ! Let it end how it would, let him be altered as he might, she would see him again—face to face, and alone. She had spurned him—spurned his honest, noble, devoted love ; and now, if such was his deliberate wish, he might as haughtily reject her.

It seemed morning would never come ; but, at length, its waking glance—grey and dim, but how welcome—broke into the room. Then it grew brighter and brighter, opening a glorious day ; and Clara's heart beat high as she thought—on such weak auguries do we hang our destiny !—that its radiance was auspicious.

By an apparently careless inquiry she had learnt Ernest's address; and after breakfast, she went out unobserved, and engaging a cab, proceeded to his chambers.

Ernest was busy at his vocation when he learnt, to his surprise, that a lady wished to see him; and before he could make any observation, Clara, closely veiled, followed the servant into the room. The next moment they were alone; but she still stood silent, with the long, thick veil masking her face, waiting for him to address her.

"I have not the pleasure of knowing you," he said at length, though there was a slight tremor of doubt in his voice. "May I ask to what I am indebted for this visit?"

Now she raised her veil, and the effect gave her new confidence.

"Clara!—Mrs. Wilmore!" exclaimed Ernest.

“ Yes! Clara!—that is the name I like best,” she replied. “ It reminds me of my days of happiness, when I knew no other.”

“ But it is one I have no longer a right to use.”

“ If I restore you the right.”

“ It is impossible.”

Her colour came and went, but she replied in a calm voice—

“ I never thought to hear you say so. But our feelings alter as we grow older, and I have myself changed since I saw you. But I have been in affliction. You know Wilmore is dead? ”

“ Dead? ”

“ Yes. Within a month from—from our marriage, he was thrown from his horse, and killed on the spot.”

“ How shocking! ”—And he hastened to place a chair for her—for in his surprise

at her appearance, he had kept her standing.

“Am I to sit down?”

“Will you?”—It was not the entreaty of a lover, but she complied.

“You have grown much graver than you used to be,” she said, with an unconscious sigh.

“I have been under the same discipline as yourself—affliction, which makes us all grave,” he replied.

“Do you think it has produced such a marked effect on me?”

“You are not so gay as you were.”

“But I am older.”

“Twenty months.”

“How well you remember! That is exactly the time.”

“I thought so,” said Ernest. .

She raised her eyes—eyes that spoke more eloquently than words—sweet, soft,

liquid azure eyes, opening depths of thought and feeling and tenderness, which no plummet could sound. But Ernest knew their power, and would not look up.

“Twenty months!” she said, as if to herself. “It might have been as many years—so tedious, so endless has the time seemed in passing! Yet it is nothing to glance back.”

“You think not?”

“Sometimes I do. You loved me, then, Ernest!”

“I did indeed.”

“Yes, and I knew it before you told me—long before! How I used to sit and watch for you—to know the precise minute you would arrive, to hear and recognise your approaching step! Why should I scruple to tell you, Ernest?—when you told me, unworthy, miserable that I was—so much—so much!”

“You should have forgotten that,” said Ernest, covering his eyes with his hand.

“How could I, when every burning word had entered here?”—And she smote her breast.—“Could I think even my country was more dear, more precious! But you have recalled, repudiated those sentiments!”

Ernest was silent.

“Why do you avert your face?” she said, pleadingly. “Am I so much less than I was, that you will not even look at me?”

“I dare not look at you.”

“Dare not?”

“No.”

“And why?”

“Because you were once the light of my eyes, the joy and hope and pride of my heart, and in you and for you I seemed to live!”

“ *Once* I was this ?—*once* ! Cruel Ernest ! ”

“ It is you who are cruel, Clara !—yes ! for this one last time, I say Clara ! You call me back to memories I have buried, buried with anguish, and—why should I suppress it ?—with tears ! You drag them from the grave, but neither you nor I can bring them back to life. They have perished for ever.”

“ Still cruel, cruel ! ” said Clara, with a flood of tears.

“ No ”—and “ dear Clara ” was on his lips, but was denied utterance. •

“ You hate and despise me ! ”

“ Never can I do so ! ”

“ But can you forgive ? ”

“ Freely.”

“ Ernest, I see how it is ! ”—and she spoke with constrained calmness.—“ That heart, which was once all mine, which you

solemnly pledged and devoted eternally to me—that dear, but false, stern heart, you have now given to another. I feel we are together for the last time, yet tell me it is so: let the bitter truth come from you.”

That was indeed a bitter truth, which blanched his cheek and almost sealed his lips, while Clara uttered a cry and rushed from the room.

Ernest’s first impulse was to follow her—to bring her back: but for what? Prudence, though in the faintest whisper, counselled him to refrain. True, she had revived in him something of his former admiration, but it was no longer associated with any tender or impassioned sentiment. Nor did she appear to be the same Clara he had loved so devotedly. The outward form indeed was there, but, as it seemed to him, it was tenanted by another spirit—a spirit far different from that which

had presented her to his charmed eye as a being, not of earth, but of light. No! this was not the Clara of his love, of his imagination, even of his memory. The one was an angel; the other, alas! was but poor, feeble, fragile flesh and blood. The casket was still untarnished, but its precious gem was gone.

Then, why follow her? why renew and prolong a scene so terrible to both, and which, after all, must have the same termination? All he could say, if he expressed his real feelings, would perhaps fail to soothe her, while every word would be torture to himself. Better as it was! The pang of separation, for him as well as her, was sharp and piercing, but it must be endured; and now its first cruel racking force was spent.

Cold, stern, inexorable philosophy! yet true! It was more humane, with the

sentiments which now inspired him, to let her depart unconsolated, since uncomforted it must have been! This was the thought that held him back—that bound him to the spot like a chain. No shade of resentment, no vindictive regrets, mingled for a moment with the gentle, kindly flood of pity she had awakened in his bosom. But it was purely pity, and not akin to love.

Nor, in the height of his agitation, did he forget the impressions which now linked him to Emily—impressions fraught, to all appearance, with the same evil destiny. The rumour indeed of Mr. De Burgh's approaching ruin was no longer confined to particular coteries: it had that morning been hinted at, in unmistakable terms, in an influential journal. Viewing this fact in connexion with the wilful inattention manifested for Emily by Wordley,

at Lady Brookville's ball, Ernest, if he had been of a more sordid mould, might easily have conjured up a brighter prospect for himself; but he could never build his own happiness on the misery of others, and Mr. De Burgh, in his great reverse of fortune, possessed no truer, warmer, or more devoted friend.

All day—for work was now thrown aside—his mind was busy with these distracting thoughts, and at night, he could hardly drag himself away, though obliged to attend the first representation of a new tragedy, on which he had to furnish a critique for a morning paper. But once in the theatre, he remained till the performances closed, and even then, unwilling to return home, strolled leisurely through the streets, glancing at the darker life which they faintly shadowed forth. Gradually the very shadows disappeared. It

was the dead hour of night, and he stopped before a large house, which, though he had seen it but once before, was vividly impressed on his memory : the next moment he sprang over the gate and disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOUSE AT PADDINGTON.

It was past midnight when a man, who had been crouching some time in an adjacent shrubbery, came out on the drive before Mr. Glynn's house at Paddington, and cautiously reconnoitred the premises, back and front. The hat of the marauder was pulled over his eyes, and the collar of his worn coat turned up, so as to leave but little of his face visible, but it was not difficult, as he came within the range of a

neighbouring gas-light, to recognise the features of Frost.

Jessie, though she would willingly have kept it a secret, had been obliged to inform him of her rencontre with Mr. Glynn, and subsequent visit to Paddington ; and hence he had ascertained, by dexterous inquiries, what was the old man's mode of life, in as far as he appeared to be shut up alone in the house, with no attendant but the old charwoman. This suggested to him the practicability of a descent on the mansion, as a very easy and promising undertaking.

Nor were his expectations unwarranted. An old man, burdened with years and infirmity, and an equally infirm woman, offered an easy prey, if it should be necessary to resort to violence ; and from no violence would he shrink, if it would add to his booty. Let him secure but that,

and he would soon be on his way back to America, by the same vessel that conveyed Wordley.

All was quiet. The window of the old man's room, where a light had long lingered, was now dark; a glance down the lonely road showed that no person was about; the policeman on the beat had just passed, and, judging from the previous intervals, half an hour would elapse before he again came round: in that brief space the two inmates of the house might be sent beyond the reach of earthly aid.

Frost first attempted the door; but strong plates of iron, with which it was impanelled within, effectually resisted his incisions, and, finding it thus secured, he saw that an entry here was impossible. A low window held out a more hopeful prospect, and laying down his implements,

he spread a pitch-plaster over one of the panes, when he was able to push it through without any crash, the broken glass sticking to the plaster. He then scooped a piece out of the shutter, with a sort of circular sweep, and, thrusting his hand through the orifice, removed the fastening, and opened the shutter without difficulty. The next moment he was in the house.

A profound stillness reigned, broken only by the ticking of a dial in the adjoining passage, which, as Frost stood listening, struck one. As the vibration ceased, the burglar turned on his lantern. He was in the dining-room, and a massive, old-fashioned sideboard, looming out from the wall, instantly attracted his eye. His professional instruments were again drawn forth, and the various locks successively and speedily picked, but only to disclose

emptiness. He turned away with a malediction.

Again masking his lantern, he was passing into the hall, when a sound overhead, like a footstep, arrested him. But it proved to be only one of those unaccountable noises so common in old mansions, and after an instant's pause, he proceeded—first, however, taking the precaution to throw off his shoes, thinking he could move about more quietly with his naked feet.

The rooms below were soon ransacked, but with little result; and he began to suspect, with some truth, that whatever was valuable in the place would be found in Mr. Glynn's room. Thither he accordingly repaired, determined to secure a rich spoil.

Mr. Glynn, after lying some time awake, had sunk into a troubled doze,

when he was aroused by the same noise that had startled Frost. Not so easily reassured, he sat up in the bed to listen. All was still ; but his suspicions, once excited, were not easily allayed ; and presently he heard a rustling sound in the passage. This was followed by another, as if some one had turned the handle of the door ; then a skeleton key was thrust into the lock ; and the door, which was right opposite to the bed, slowly opened.

It was quite dark ; but the old man, as he sat up in bed, saw a black figure enter, and stand peering round. As he continued to gaze at him, Frost, supposing from the prevailing stillness that he was asleep, disclosed his light.

“ Oh ! you’re lookin’ about you, are you ? ” he said, perceiving Mr. Glynn.

“ Yes,” was the calm reply. “ Who are you, and what do you want here ? ”

“It’s no odds who I am,” answered Frost;—“nobody, if you like; but I’ll tell you what I want: I want swag.”

“You mean you’ve come to rob me!”

“No such thing: I’ve only come to take what you’ve got. You aint half so polite as Squire Wordley. But it’s true, there’s no time now for compliments: so I’ll just fill my sack, and walk.”

“Man, you shall take nothing from here!” cried Mr. Glynn, springing from the bed. “You think, because I am old, I am helpless; but you shall see it is not so.”—And he snatched up a poker, and as Frost rushed upon him, aimed a blow at his head, which, had it taken effect, would certainly have been a decisive one.

“I’ll have your blood for that!” cried the burglar, with an oath.

“Murder! help!” cried another voice.

And the old charwoman rushed into the room.

“Silence, you hag!” exclaimed Frost, “or I’ll stick a knife into you.”

“Call from the window, woman!” shouted Mr. Glynn, struggling in the burglar’s grasp.

Before she could do so, however, Frost, flinging Mr. Glynn from him, intercepted her, and, with one blow, felled her to the floor. Then, drawing forth a knife, he was rushing again on Mr. Glynn, when his arm was seized behind, and the next moment he was stretched prostrate.

“Gallows! is it you?” he cried, starting to his feet as he found himself confronted by Ernest, who, hearing the outcry, had entered the house through the open window. “Take that, then.”

He levelled a pistol; but, by some accident, the cap had fallen off, and missing

fire, he threw the useless weapon at Ernest's head, and rushed out.

But a destiny was upon him. In the dark, his foot caught in the balustrade of the staircase, and he plunged headlong down the long flight of spiral stone steps, never stopping till he reached the hall. Ernest, only waiting to ascertain the safety of his uncle, had darted after him, but too late to arrest his descent.

Meanwhile, the cries of the charwoman, who continued screaming from the window, had attracted the attention of the police, and when Ernest gained the hall, the door was besieged by two constables, whom he instantly admitted. At the same time, Mr. Glynn, who had never for a moment lost his self-possession, appeared with a light, and they all gathered round the outstretched body of Frost.

"He appears to be insensible," said

Ernest, after bending over him for an instant.

“Queer about the neck, sir,” replied one of the policemen, loosening his cravat.

The other constable threw back his head, and made a guttural noise, symbolical of a choking sensation.

Frost, who had met their scrutiny with an unconscious stare, now seemed to rally a little, and tried to raise himself up. With difficulty he lifted one hand, and pointing at Mr. Glynn, muttered faintly : —“ NEPHEW — FORGER — BEG — BEGGARS’ OPERA.” — As these seemingly unmeaning words escaped his lips, he fell back ; a strong convulsion pervaded his frame ; and in a few minutes, he was a corpse.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAPTAIN'S DAY OUT.

IT was daylight before Mr. Glynn and Ernest found themselves alone : so active, now their services were no longer required, were the police, coming and going for the remainder of the night with the most unwearied, and, it must be added, most irritating vigilance, besides keeping a blockading force on the premises. But at length, the two reconciled kinsmen were able to sit down to some coffee, which the poor charwoman, in spite of the persecu-

tions of the police, had contrived to prepare.

“You heard what that miserable ruffian said,” observed Mr. Glynn, after a few moments’ abstraction. “What is to be done about it?”

“I thought he was raving,” said Ernest.

“Don’t you know, then, your cousin—that we must call him so!—has committed a crime tantamount to forgery? He is now hiding from the police, and this man has informed them of his retreat.”

“I had not heard a word of it,” replied Ernest, greatly shocked. “But he must be rescued from the disgrace of a public trial—if not for his own sake, for ours: for yours, sir. Would it not be well to pay the amount he is implicated for?”

“A hundred times over I would pay it, if that would avail; but it is too late.

We can't buy off the law—and thank God it is so, though, in this case, we who are innocent will suffer with the guilty.”

“This must not be !” exclaimed Ernest, with emotion. “Apart from the sympathy of kindred, which we must still feel for Wordley, such a slur on our name would break my heart, as I am sure it would yours. He must be saved, sir, and though we help him to evade the law, he will not go unpunished, nor will justice be the least defrauded. He will have to pass the remainder of his life in exile, and you will pay back the money he has wrongfully obtained.”

“You say well, my dear Ernest. We should save him at all risks ; but how ?”

“I must go to him, if I can only find out where this place is.”

“There is the difficulty,” said Mr. Glynn, with a distracted look. “But stay.

There is a man named Blackman—a Captain Blackman.”

“What of him?”

“You know him?”

“Slightly.”

“If you could find him out, I have no doubt you might reach Wordley.”

“It is strange I happened to learn his address the other day by accident. I had better go to him at once.”

“Pray do.”—He opened a drawer, and drew forth a roll of notes.—“Take these with you,” he continued, placing them in Ernest’s hand. “Money will do anything with this man, and if we attain our object, it should be no consideration with us.”

“And none it shall be,” said Ernest.

“Bless you, my dear boy,” said Mr. Glynn, wringing his hand. And Ernest departed.

A Hansom, which he called from a

neighbouring stand, speedily bore him to the Captain's residence, a large, shabby, and very antique house, in the purlieus of Westminster School. The abbey clock struck six as he alighted at the Captain's door; but, as the morning was Sunday, when Londoners are usually not very early astir, the old street, never too animated, presented an extremely secluded appearance. Nor was it difficult for Ernest to imagine that it was absolutely depopulated; for divers thundering peals on the Captain's door, each time growing beautifully louder, elicited no response whatever either from the inmates or the neighbours; and he was despairing of making any impression, when, happening to look up, he saw a man's head reconnoitring from the attic, and quickly recognised the bald crown of the Captain.

“Is it you, my dear fellow?” cried the

man-of-war, in the most friendly way, though, if the truth must be told, he had only spoken to Ernest once before. “ ’Pon honour, delighted to see you. I’ll be with you in an instant.”

And in an incredibly short time he was down at the door, fully dressed, including hat and gloves.

“ By Jove, I’m very glad to see you,” he said. “ Allow me to have the honour of shaking hands with you. I’m sorry I can’t ask you in”—the Captain never asked any one in—“ but the fact is, I only have chambers here, and the people get up so confoundedly late. But I tell you what—we’ll go and breakfast together in Palace Yard : a very good idea, by George !”

“ I shall be most happy,” replied Ernest ; “ but, first, I should tell you I wish to consult with you about my cousin.”

“Your cousin! Which cousin is that?” said the Captain, innocently.

“I have only one—Wordley Glynn.”

“Wordley Glynn!” repeated the Captain, as if he heard the name for the first time. “Ah! to be sure. What’s become of him? He’s been rather scarce for a day or two.”

“You’re not aware, then, that he is—is in some trouble?”

“You don’t say so!”

Ernest, who had been fully persuaded that the Captain knew all the particulars, as well as Wordley’s present retreat, was quite astonished at his apparent ignorance. In a moment, however, it occurred to him that it might be feigned, from some lurking suspicion of his intentions; and he determined to put a question which should test the Captain’s sincerity.

“Yes, a little affair. I thought you

might have heard of it," he said. "By the way, Captain, you know the town well; can you tell me anything of a place called the Beggars' Opera?"

"By George, I think there's a play of that name—yes, by Jove! I've seen it, with a powerful caste, my boy. Fine character, Macheath." But his face winced under Ernest's glance.

"Oh! it's a place about town, I mean," said Ernest, "and I would give something to find it." He mechanically drew forth the roll of notes, and turned them over in his hand, making the Captain's eyes sparkle.

"I tell you what it is," said the Captain, at length; "they say you and your cousin are not very good friends, and, perhaps, you'd be glad to see his hash settled in this business. By Jove, sir, I'm a man of honour—I can't betray my

friend. At the same time, if I could lay my hand at this moment on a hundred pounds, I think I could find out this place for you."

"Could you convey a message to Wordley Glynn?"

"A message! between two cousins! Egad! that's sharp work, and I don't know how I could appear in it against him. But under the circumstances—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Ernest. "I don't mean a hostile message. But I see now you are in my cousin's confidence. What I wish to announce to him is, that his retreat has been betrayed to the police, and they are probably at this moment on his track."

"That's a floorer," replied the Captain, "by Jove!"

But they had just reached the hotel in Palace Yard, and, having made up his

mind to a good breakfast, the Captain, after lingering a moment on the steps, in a meditative posture, thought it better to lead the way in.

“ I don’t know what beverages you usually take,” he said to Ernest, as they entered the coffee-room : “ it’s the same thing to me : I love them all, and am a great consumer of liquids, being always thirsty. Suppose we have tea and coffee.”

Ernest agreed, and the Captain ordered breakfast, which, by his desire, included a large supply of eatables, and, in fact, he proved to be nearly as great a consumer of solids as he was of liquids.

“ Breakfast first, and business afterwards,” he said, “ is my maxim ; and it’s a remarkable circumstance that I can never talk when I’m hungry. I always begin Sunday—that’s to-day, you know—with a good breakfast. Sunday is my day

out. Then I can take my walks abroad without fear of John Doe or Richard Roe. By George! the acts of audacity I'm guilty of on Sunday, my dear fellow, would surprise you. I've walked straight up to Honest Moses on a Sunday, and chaffed him. I have, by Jove!"

"Indeed," said Ernest. "But, Captain, I'm really very anxious about this business of my cousin. Pray tell me what can be done for him."

"Suppose you tell me first what has been done, while I finish these kidneys," returned the Captain, helping himself to a fresh allowance.

Ernest briefly related the particulars as they had happened.

"Humph!" observed the Captain, when he had concluded; "not so bad as it might be, but bad enough. The case has been given to Naylor, of the Detectives ;

but I've contrived to put him on a wrong track, and he's off to Bristol, and can't be back till late to-night. Meanwhile, the policemen who were at your uncle's this morning will report what occurred there, as well as what that rascal said when he was dying. It's rather enigmatical, and not every one will make sense of it; but, by George, sir! it will be as plain as print to Naylor. I think we may reckon ourselves safe till he comes back; but, after that, we shan't have a minute. What a splendid head of hair you've got! It must be hereditary in your family."

"Then, what do you advise?" said Ernest, without noticing the interpellation. "My cousin must be got off, let it cost what it may."

"You have probably often heard me remark that a nod's as good as a wink," rejoined the Captain. "I perceive your

object is to get your cousin out of your way—out of the country, in fact. Now don't interrupt me. As it happens, this suits the purposes of all. But, by Jove, it will cost money—under the circumstances. I've taken his passage; but the vessel won't sail for three days, and I thought he might have kept quiet here for that time. But, egad! now he must start at once for the coast, and go off to the ship in a pilot-boat."

"And will you see him at once, and carry out this scheme?"

"Impossible. You don't know what a den the Beggars' Opera is. I could only go there at night, and by Jove, I would n't go by myself for—no, egad! not for twice the figure."

"I wish you to remember money is to be no consideration in this transaction. Whatever is required shall be forthcoming.

As to your visit to my cousin, if there is any danger, I am willing to share it."

"Game!" cried the Captain. "Allow me to have the honour of shaking hands with you. If you'll go with me, we'll venture—and, i'faith, it will be a venture. There's a man called Flash Jem, who may be serviceable, if we can get hold of him, but that's not sure. Anyway, have a chaise in readiness in Farringdon Street, and come to my crib in the evening at seven. I'll have a disguise for you, and, as soon as it's dark, we'll slip out of the house, and, by Jove, we'll proceed."

"At seven o'clock," replied Ernest. "I will be punctual."

And he paid the bill, and departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUNDAY NIGHT.

It is Sunday night. Not long since, the bell tolled for the solemn celebration of public service ; and even now, crowds are pouring from the various metropolitan churches, where, during the day, devout millions have worshipped. The Pharisee has been up to the Temple to pray: perhaps, too, the penitent, as in days of old, has stood at the gate, and pleaded for mercy. A thousand spires rise to Heaven above the countless roofs of the city ; and under

the shadow of each, it has this day been declared, in the awful accents of inspiration, that the poor are to be our first and special care.

The poor!—the outcast, the leper, the orphan child, the famishing man, the betrayed, degraded, defaced woman; all who are weary and heavy-laden, from the fields and by-places, the housetop and cellar—all have been invited, and, as at the Great King's supper, *forced to come in*, that they may be taught the way of life and truth and virtue.

Alas, no! this vast city, fair and comely as it looks, hides a leprosy beneath its cloak: this whited sepulchre is full of rotting, festering, polluted—we cannot say souls, for no vestige of spirituality remains. But men brutalized, women unsexed, children grey in iniquity, and who never felt the balmy breath of innocence,

here, in the midst of the town, close to the rich man's door, and almost under the shadow of the church, live in the open practice of every vice that can debase our nature, without ever hearing the voice of Religion, or feeling the beneficent influence of even human knowledge.

Rain is falling; and the straggling knots of passengers in Holborn hurry along, regardless of everything around. The shops are all closed, but from one stately window comes a flood of light, throwing a grey reflection on the wall of St. Andrew's church-yard, on the opposite side of the street. It is in front of this house that two men dressed in soiled and threadbare suits, with their patched faces clothed in false hair, forming a luxuriant combination of whisker, beard, and moustache, and almost buried under wide-awake hats, suddenly come to a stand,

while one peers through the mirror-like window of the gin-palace into the interior.

“He’s there,” said this individual, in whom it was impossible to recognize Captain Blackman. “I’ll go in, and speak to him.”

He pushed through the door, while Ernest—for his companion was no other—waited without. Still his eyes were riveted on the gorgeous fabric before him, which art and taste had exhausted all their devices to beautify, and he could not repress a thrill of indignation, as, looking up, he saw over the door the name of a millionaire, the proprietor of this abominable sink of iniquity. In a few moments the Captain reappeared.

“I’ve spoken to Flash Jem,” he said, “and the five-pound note has settled him. He’s undertaken to be our guide.”

“Can’t we send a message by him, with-

out going to such a den ourselves?" replied Ernest. "I confess I shrink from the undertaking."

"Fiddle! And what you propose is impossible; for your cousin would only suspect a trap. As Frost is non est inventus, he won't move till he sees me, and hang me if I'll go without you."

"Let us proceed, then."

"You'd better come in here first. You'll see, then, if you pass muster, and that will give you confidence."

Assenting, Ernest followed him into the gin-palace.

It was a strange scene. The sumptuous bar, its lofty ceiling supported by columns of variegated marble—the radiant lights, the fittings of rosewood, ivory, and pearl, with the painted and bedizened barmaids, and the squalid, miserable, carousing bacchanals, each with the brand of Cain

on his hardened brow. Ernest instinctively recognised Flash Jem—a short, thick-set, hard-featured man, dressed in a showy white coat, a sky-blue cravat, and railroad trousers ; and having a profusion of long black locks dangling from beneath his white hat. As they entered, he came forward to meet them, holding aloft in one hand a small pewter measure of gin, while he flourished about a glass with the other.

“ Jim along Josey,” he said to the Captain. “ Damp your mags.”

“ Thankee, I’m never thirsty,” replied the Captain, with astounding self-denial. “ I believe I was once nipped by a mad dog ; and ever since, I’ve shied at all descriptions of fluids. Makes me shiver, by Jove !”

“ Gig !” exclaimed Jem. “ Here,” and he proffered the glass to Ernest—“ off with his head.”

Ernest shrank back.

“He’s deaf and dumb,” said the Captain, fearing Ernest was going to commit himself. “Don’t give him gin, or you’ll set him wild.”

“Gig again !” cried Jem.—And he tossed the liquid fire down his own fated throat.

Around rose the hoarse shout, the frantic laugh, the snatch of ribald song, the blasphemous oath ; and, through the stately window, Ernest saw the illuminated clock of the Church, on the opposite side of the street, looking down on the scene like a great EYE—reminding him it was Sunday night.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA.

SUNDAY NIGHT ! We are ascending Saffron Hill—the Tarpeian Rock, where so many are hurled into perdition. Through a dark frowning archway, we enter, not the recesses, but the intestines of the city. Here no Levite passes even on the other side, here no Samaritan ever comes, here the great capital pours a stream of reeking filth past the very doors of tottering, rotting houses, teeming with beings as vile and polluted, who know not their right

hand from their left : a nursery of pestilence, a hotbed of crime, a vast, horrible, eternal lazar-house, where body and soul are equally infected, and equally lost.

On, under the black archway, up court and passage and narrow fetid lane, with the black gutter ever running through, like a vein of poison—with the same sounds of strife and wicked revelry, the same pestilent and deadly miasma, rising on every side : Ernest and the Captain followed their conductor in silence and with rapid steps, wondering what was his clue to the Labyrinth. At last, they came to a passage so narrow that they could only enter it separately, and after proceeding some paces, Flash Jem, who went first, dived into an open doorway, hardly visible in the darkness, though within a rushlight, stuck in a sconce against the wall, showed a long corridor, where,

directly under the light, a strange, misshapen figure, about three feet high, and apparently all head, loomed out from the deep flitting shadows, behind a small table. This was the Cerberus of the Pandemonium, and he laughed long and loud as the company entered.

“Why, Jem, my flower of society, you’ve been scarce a bit,” he cried, as they came up to the table. “But who’s your henchmen?”

“Two swells out of luck,” answered Jem. “I’m gagsman for ’em.”

“You!” returned the dwarf, with a shriek of laughter. “But they aint blues: so down with your tanner and walk.”

Each paid his sixpence, the nightly charge for shelter, in this model lodging-house, and which, to prevent any attempt at spoliation, was immediately dropped

down a long pipe into a well-secured receptacle beneath the floor, the dwarf repeating his scream of delight as he threw it in.

“Now you may hop,” he cried, touching a spring in the wall.

“Jim along Josey,” said Jem. And he skipped by the table, and thrusting his hand in a ring in the floor, raised a trap-door, disappearing in the abyss. The Captain and Ernest followed, and, as they descended a ladder below, narrowly escaped a concussion from the falling trap-door, which the dwarf, by again touching the spring, caused to drop prematurely, going off in another ecstasy at their discomfiture.

But new incidents were before them. In the humid cellar below, there was only a glimmer of light; but a noise different from anything Ernest had ever heard; a

strange confusion of harsh, discordant sounds, a Babel of tongues, broke on the ear, and the next moment a door was thrown open by Jem, disclosing the seat of the uproar.

It was a long low cellar, with gas-lights flaring from black pipes in the wall, throwing up volumes of smoke, and shedding a vivid light on scores of callous faces, rife with the worst passions of our nature. All ages were there, from the hoary ruffian of ninety to the infant in arms, clinging to the breast of its drunken mother. Here, a party squatted on the ground were playing cards; there, two young lads, seated on the corner of a greasy, dirt-stained table, were engaged with dominoes; further on, others rattled the dice-box; and a knot of smaller fry, of both sexes, were tossing half-pence, which rolled about with an impunity

verifying the adage that there is honour among thieves. In the midst of this Vanity Fair half-a-dozen little urchins were being trained as pickpockets, under the superintending eye of a man in a drugget coat, with very high cheek bones and a pug nose, who enacted the part of a detective, and whenever he saw the theft committed, pounced upon the lax and clumsy operator, and cruelly ill-used him. There were the blind, the maimed, and the halt, with all their infirmities cured: the chiffonnier, the sham sweep, the vender of illicit spirits, with a skin of the liquid poison hanging from his waist, the crossing-sweeper, and the cadger. There, stood a group of little children, who had been begging all day—the borrowed family of a ballad-singer, and who, now released from duty, were listening in ecstasies to a vile catch, carolled by an Ethiopian serenader ;

while two men were sparring close by, amidst the plaudits of a small circle of admirers.

Then the din! the mingled strains of the banjo and cracked fiddle—the roars of boisterous laughter, the ribald songs, the horrid maledictions, the affected shouts of girls and women as they romped about in the throng—made Ernest's ear and heart ache; and he looked up at the black wall as if he again expected to see the illuminated clock of the church gazing down on the scene like a great EYE, reminding him it was Sunday night.

As he entered, a woman who had been crouching in the dark cellar, without, catching sight of his face as he passed, suddenly started up, when Ernest, looking round, seemed to have a dim remembrance of her features.

“Jessie!” murmured he.

“Hush!” was the whispered reply; “I guess who you want. He’s sitting in the corner there.”

Ernest moved in the direction indicated, taking care, as he glided through the throng, to avoid any collision. At length, he reached Wordley, whose disguise, however, he did not immediately penetrate.

“Ah!” said Wordley, as he accosted him; “you here! How do you do? I’m delighted to see you.” And he was as polite and courtly, as if it was his uncle’s drawing-room.—“Life here, isn’t it? No stage can come up to this!”

“Follow us out,” replied Ernest, as much shocked at his recklessness as by the scene around. “You must fly directly.”

“Ha!”

“By Jove, I’m afraid we’re fixed!” said the Captain, striking in. “Jem can’t break the spring of the trap, and there’s no other

way of raising it. The dwarf lets no one out till morning, when they're once in."

Here the Captain's ally sauntered up.

"He's here now," he muttered.

"Who?" replied the Captain.

"Look!"

And, turning his eye on the door, the Captain discerned Naylor, the detective.

"Keep behind us," said Ernest to Wordley. "We'll make a dash for the door."

"No use in that," said the Captain. "We're like Sterne's starling—we can't get out."

"Follow me," said Jessie, stealing up to Ernest.

"Do you know the trick?" asked Flash Jem.

"Yes."

She stooped down against the wainscot, and a panel, yielding to her pressure, flew open, disclosing a dark cellar beyond. Instantly every eye was turned on the aperture, and a shout broke from every voice, while there was a general rush to the spot. But Flash Jem, stimulated by a fresh donation, drove back the foremost; and Ernest, Wordley, and the Captain darted after Jessie, who, as they joined her, shot back the panel, for the moment interposing a barrier to pursuit.

They were now in complete darkness, while the din behind, audible through the partition, reminded them of the necessity of despatch. Jessie, indeed, lost not a moment in groping about for the outlet, but this was not so easily found. At last, she came upon it; the massive bolts were removed; and a kick from Ernest, breaking away the rusty hinges, drove through

the trap, which fell with a splash into a black, fetid stream without. It was the Fleet Ditch.

“The plank !” said Jessie, standing in the aperture. “Reach it up.”

“Here it is,” cried Ernest.

They raised it to the ledge, and pushing it over the stream, planted one end on a low wall on the other bank, thus bridging the channel.

In a moment they were all across ; and Ernest, to cut off pursuit, pushed the plank into the stream.

“By Jove, they’ve got through,” cried the Captain.

There was a loud shout, and, looking round, Ernest saw the aperture was now occupied by the Detective, who instantly sprang his rattle, arousing the whole neighbourhood.

“What’s to be done now, my gallant

friend?" asked Wordley of the Captain, who, indeed, knew not which way to shape his course.

"We want to reach Holborn, Jessie," said Ernest.

"I can guide you!"

A narrow footway ran between the wall and the houses, leading into a dark court, and, traversing this, Jessie conducted them, with rapid steps, through a maze of tortuous passages, to a sort of yard, opening on Holborn Hill. Fortunately it was raining hard, and the hour being now late, but few people were about, so that they encountered no interruption, and reaching the great thoroughfare, they struck across to Farringdon-Street, where the post-chaise awaited them. Pulling open the door, the Captain sprang in, followed by Wordley.

"One moment," said Ernest. And he

added, "Can you find your way to Paddington, Jessie?"

"To your uncle?"

"Ah! you know then! Yes, to him. Tell him we are on our way to the coast. He has promised me to take care of you for the future. But you will learn more from him—of Frost: more than you think."

He waved his hand, and springing up the steps, the chaise whirled off.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHICH IS THE LAST.

IT was a sad morning at Mr. De Burgh's. The intelligence received from various quarters, though still imperfect, left no doubt of the loss of the Indiaman, on which the whole of his remaining fortune, with the exception of a settlement on Mrs. De Burgh, was staked; and the day had now arrived, when the proud man was to leave his great house, with all its splendour and luxury, and hide his diminished head in a cottage. Already the establishment was

broken up; and of his large retinue of servants, only two were retained; while a hired fly stood at the door to carry away those who, but a few days previously, had had a stately chariot at their beck. As Mr. De Burgh sat in his magnificent library—his no longer—ruminating on this melancholy reverse, and waiting only the appearance of his wife and daughter to depart, he realized the experience of the wisest of men, that everything living is but vanity. Memory bore him back to the days of his childhood, when, the son of a petty tradesman, he had spent many an hour in his father's shop; then he saw himself, as he grew older, a successful man of business, a speculator, a capitalist, gradually rising to the summit of commercial eminence. Where now was the gold he had so coveted, so loved? where his miserable adulators, his troops of friends? All, at a touch, had

vanished, like the mist of morning ; and, as the sun of his prosperity went down, he stood helpless and alone in the dark night of his adversity.

Helpless and alone !—for in this moment of bitterness, he counted as nothing the dutiful wife, the loving child. All that woman's gentle voice, and woman's tender sympathy, could do, by a thousand soothing ministrations, failed to alleviate the stern anguish of his spirit ; and, mourning for the sordid metal which possessed his affections, he was like the stricken parent of old, who refused to be comforted.

So absorbed was he in his reflections, that the door opened without attracting his notice ; and Mrs. De Burgh entered, accompanied by Ernest Glynn.

“I have not come to disturb you yet, my dear Mr. De Burgh,” said his wife, in a cheerful voice. “I shall not be ready

for a few minutes, but, meanwhile, I have brought a friend to see you."

"A *friend*, ma'am!" answered Mr. De Burgh, with a caustic emphasis on the word.

"If you will allow me to call myself so, Mr. De Burgh," said Ernest, stepping forward.

"Much obliged to you, sir," replied the proud man, stiffly.

"I should not have intruded upon you this morning," pursued Ernest, "if, knowing my feelings, Mrs. De Burgh had not allowed me to speak to you on a subject so connected with my peace that every moment of delay is a burden and a trial to me. May I hope you will confirm this indulgence?"

"You may proceed, sir," said Mr. De Burgh; "but I will beg you to be brief."

"In a word, then, sir, I have contracted

a sincere attachment for Miss De Burgh—and one of such a character, that I can no longer defer asking your permission to pay my addresses to her. Let me entreat you not to decide against me, as on your answer depends the happiness or misery of my life.”

This appeal, if not the proposal, seemed rather to amaze Mr. De Burgh, and he suddenly shook off his apathy, and eyed Ernest with a peculiarly searching glance.

“I have told Mr. Glynn of the sort of promise you are under to his cousin about Emily,” observed Mrs. De Burgh, “although his conduct since may be thought to have cancelled that engagement; and it appears he has admitted as much himself.”

“Not only so, but he has given me this letter,” said Ernest, producing a sealed epistle, “in which he formally releases

Mr. De Burgh from his promise. He put it into my hands yesterday morning, when I saw him on board ship, on his way to America."

"Ha!" muttered Mr. De Burgh.—And opening the letter, he ran his eye over the contents.

"This is so far well," he said, though with a frown. "But are you aware that owing to the great losses I have sustained, my daughter has now no cap—I mean, fortune?"

"But for my knowledge of this circumstance, I should hardly have ventured to seek your immediate approbation of my suit," returned Ernest, modestly. "My own income, indeed, is small, but I hope, by diligence and exertion, to make it sufficient for our requirements, if I should be so fortunate and so happy as to obtain Miss De Burgh's hand, and I shall endeavour

to compensate for our humble establishment by my affection and devotion."

"You're a person of very extraordinary feelings, sir," said Mr. De Burgh.

Ernest was rather embarrassed by this remark; but, at length, said, "May I hope you will sanction my addresses, sir—and Mrs. De Burgh also?"

"Let Mr. Glynn see my daughter, ma'am," said Mr. De Burgh. "If he obtains her consent, he shall have mine."

"Mine he has already," said Mrs. De Burgh.

"Thank you, thank you, my dear, kind friends!" exclaimed Ernest, in joyous accents. "I can ask no more."

Mrs. De Burgh hurried him—but too willing—from the room, her husband looking after them till they disappeared.

"Very extraordinary!" he then mur-

mured. "He doesn't care a pin about capital. But it's his FEELINGS!"

"Emmy is in the drawing-room, just ready to go," said Mrs. De Burgh, as she led Ernest up the grand staircase. "Poor child! she bears our reverses nobly."

But when they entered the room, it was evident from a telltale redness about her soft, sweet eyes, that poor Emily had been weeping—though, perhaps, it was not from any grief at the vicissitudes of fortune.

"Ernest!" she exclaimed, looking up—and one of her old blushes spread over her face.

"Yes, dear Emily, Ernest! let me say, *your* Ernest!"—and he took her not unwilling hand. "I have come to say how I love you, dearest Emily—to lay my life at your feet."

"What is this?" cried the agitated

girl, her tears again flowing. "Ah, mamma! dear mamma! can it be true?"

And turning to Mrs. De Burgh, she hid her face on her bosom.

"I'll have nothing to do with you," said Mrs. De Burgh, though she twined her arm round her. "You're not my Emmy any longer. I give you entirely over to this good-for-nothing Ernest. It's a most singular fact."

"Dearest Emily, say you assent to the gift!" pleaded Ernest.

Yes, she was his!—his, though the word was not spoken; his in heart, in hope, by promise: his for ever! What happiness! what rapture! then indeed they felt that—for at least one moment of life—earth could be made Heaven.

But Mrs. De Burgh, for once cruel and inconsiderate, would not leave them to

themselves ; no, not for an instant. She was thinking of the proud, fallen man below, lost in the gloom of his own bitter, seared, benighted thoughts ; and, scarcely allowing them time to exchange a few words, she hurried the lovers down to the library.

Another old man was there—Mr. Glynn, talking very sociably with the broken capitalist ; and, as the party entered, all Mr. De Burgh's gloom seemed to have vanished.

“And these are my children !” cried Mr. Glynn, advancing to Ernest and Emily, “Thank God, I have lived to this hour ! And may He bless you, my dear, dear children, and make you happy in each other.”

And he took their two hands, and clasped them together.

“This is a most delightful fact !” ex-

claimed Mrs. De Burgh, tears of joy making her spectacles very dim.

“I know the value of capital,” exclaimed Mr. De Burgh, “and that is much; but there’s one thing still more valuable, and that is FEELINGS. As a matter of choice, GIVE ME FEELINGS!”

THE END.

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